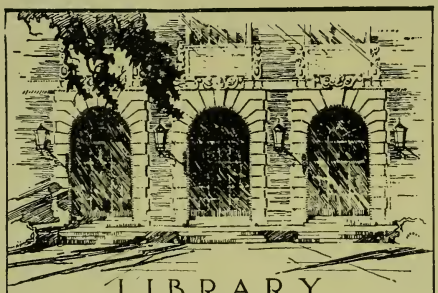
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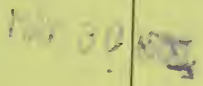
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# AT SOCIETY'S EXPENSE.

VOL. III.

# AT SOCIETY'S EXPENSE

BY

ALGERNON GISSING

AUTHOR OF

'A MOORLAND IDYL,' 'A VILLAGE HAMPDEN,' ETC.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own:
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone.'

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1894.

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# AT SOCIETY'S EXPENSE.

## CHAPTER I.

### A GLANCE BEHIND.

Beatrice could scarce resist the impulse to fly instantly to Helen. The thought of that other marriage had simply astounded her, but the thought of this one rested upon her like a nightmare, and it seemed that any means were justifiable which would only swiftly and irrevocably

effect its frustration. This attitude to the catastrophe was so absorbing that the mere mystery of how such a train of circumstances had ever come into action could scarcely assert itself. Perhaps Beatrice had already come to regard the whole existence of her friend as so utterly abnormal that her conscious wonder could no longer be excited by a mere matter of detail. Even the shyness towards Helen which the alteration in their relative situations had engendered, gave way before this thing. Everything gave way before it, and, after a night of agitated reflection, Beatrice could resist no longer. She set off the following afternoon with the intention of presenting herself deliberately at the Close, and requesting an interview

with Helen; but, before she had gone any distance across the moor, she met Helen herself coming towards her.

It was very hot for the month of May, dull and oppressive, and Helen presented an attractive figure in her bright, transparent gown amidst the sea of fresh, green heath. The brilliant sunshade which she carried was flung aloft in friendly movement at the sight of Beatrice; to which, despite her agitation, the latter responded with a flourish of the hand.

'Oh, Bee, I suppose you relish this weather?' cried Helen, languidly, whilst still some way off.

The other smiled a slightly nervous negative.

'Why, you can gather honey,—but you

don't look very bright. Where are you going to?'

Beatrice blushed, stammered, and looked confused. Helen closed her lips, and her forehead wrinkled.

'Where?' she repeated quickly, and with what seemed needless energy. 'Has he found you out?'

'Oh, no, Helen . . . I was coming to see you.'

Even at sight of Helen, though her distress had increased, Beatrice knew that her power had waned. She felt afraid of what she had undertaken, and had not sufficient quickness of imagination to invent a refuge.

'Me? Are you ill? What is the matter?'

'Nothing the matter with me. I—I wanted to talk to you.'

'Ha! You have heard?' cried Helen, vivaciously.

'Yes, I have.'

And Beatrice stared at her.

They waded through the heather to where some great boulders clustered, and in the shelter of the stones they sat down. A fly or two buzzed, and there was the voice of a distant sheep, but no other sound. Beatrice rubbed the dry, last winter's lichen from the stone upon which she was sitting, and listened to the thumping of her own heart, which seemed like the pulse of all this silent universe; but she could not answer Helen's question.

'What about it, Bee? What do you want to say to me?'

At length she faltered,

'It isn't true, is it?'

'Yes, I am going to marry Mr. Barnard Goldhawke.'

Beatrice seemed to be revolving it,—the inner workings plainly visible to her companion; the attempted utterance; convulsive folding and unfolding of the fingers,—until the tongue was loosed.

'You can't marry him, darling; you sha'n't marry him,' cried Beatrice, vehemently. 'He isn't fit to look at you.'

Such passion in the submissive Beatrice was new to Helen, and it really moved her. But her instinctive construction of it

was inevitable, however cynical and cruel.

'Why, Bee, do *you* love him?'

The other sprang to her feet and glared at the speaker.

'I, Helen? I! How dare you say that to me? It is the wickedest, cruellest word you have ever said to me, if only in fun.' The young woman's emotion checked her for a moment, but she overpowered it. 'I did love him,' she went on, impulsively, 'more than you can ever possibly understand; but do you think I would prevent you marrying him for that? It shows how little you love me.'

And the hysterical Beatrice wept outright.

Helen tried to soothe her, but the passion was not exhausted.

'You can forgive what he did to your father—of course you can; what was it? But what has he made my life to me? You would never be able to forgive that, Helen. Oh, if I could tell you——'

'But you have told me about him, Bee,' interposed Helen, with stoical calmness. 'He is much changed, I think.'

'Told you, yes; as far as mere words can tell you, but I cannot tell you what I feel. If I could tear open my heart and show you that—Oh, Helen, you must not marry him! Good men will love you. You——'

'Beatrice!' interposed Helen with a haughtiness which sat very naturally upon her just now, 'I am sorry that I hurt you, and I beg you to forgive me. But it is

useless for us to discuss this matter. I can take care of myself.'

Helen's judgment seldom failed her: never in the manipulation of so simple a subject as Beatrice. The effect was sure and instant. Beatrice recoiled; but in doing so, a flash of insight seemed to inspire her.

'Do *you* love him at all, Helen?' asked she, staring wildly at the other as she drew backwards.

'Don't be impertinent,' was the angry response, and Helen left her there abruptly.

A blow in the face would have been less cruel to one of the temperament of Beatrice; and indeed Helen would gladly have adopted milder measures, but she

knew her friend, and not intending at present to disclose the whole, she was aware that the subject could but be interminable.

It was inevitable that, when alone, Beatrice should throw herself into the heather and weep. There, buried by the fragrant buds, with an adventurous bee playing around her ears, she wept long and bitterly.

Before returning to the house she wandered about for some time in dumb pursuit of at least outward composure. Gradually it came to her, and, singularly for Beatrice, in the form of positively coherent suggestion. Her mind was stirred to unwonted vigour, now that the flood of emotion had passed, and even the adorable

Helen appeared to her in a new light. At first she was alarmed by the harshness and disloyalty of her idea, but it became swiftly irresistible, and guilty though she felt at harbouring it she could find no escape. Ought not their positions to be altered? Was she the designing one and Barnard the one to require aid?

This impression became deeper with subsequent reflections, and the more she dwelt upon it the more strongly was she impelled to a course of action. Whatever the attitude of her cousin Barnard (whom once she had madly loved, and whom she now persuaded herself she just as madly hated,)—whatever his attitude to Helen Ilderton; was it conceivable that *he* could be so modified by sentiment as to be able

to come to wed with Helen Pildacre? Knowing something of Barnard, Beatrice deemed the thing impossible. Were his eyes open therefore in this matter?

On the following day, Beatrice found it more than ever an irresistible case of conscience. Whatever it cost her as an individual, she felt that there was a vital issue upon it, and that she had a great duty to perform She must know from Barnard's own lips that consciously he was marrying—Helen Pildacre.

In the afternoon she set off over the hills, and did not pause until she reached that little copse by the Pines. She lurked there for a short time, if perchance she might catch sight of him; but nobody appeared about the premises. Ultimately she boldly

approached the house, and rang the bell. A maid-servant answered it. No, Mr. Goldhawke was not at home: would she leave a name? Beatrice would not; but turned away and fled precipitately.

All her old weakness once again possessed her, and she marvelled how she had ever reached this spot. At such moments of submission, those other words of impulse seemed incomprehensible madness, and to embrace flights ludicrously beyond the utmost of her physical power. As she had time after time discovered, conflict with an active world was surely not for her; in every attempted contest she was inevitably worsted.

Whilst thus ruminating, however, fate seemed determined once more, at any rate,

to try conclusions with her. Just before her on the road appeared that figure, impressed so indelibly upon her consciousness, and which circumstances had of late recalled so vividly to her mind's eye. Mr. Barnard Goldhawke came walking towards her, but by his side was the irresistible, the adorable Helen.

After all that lapse of years, Barnard was now for the first time again to encounter that memorable face. At the first slow hazy recognition of it (for he was thinking and talking of something so widely remote from it when it appeared there,) he stood, of a sudden, motionless in the roadway. Their eyes had met, and were for a few seconds simply riveted upon each other: then those of Beatrice were lowered.

Helen glanced swiftly from one to the other, as though in appreciation of the purely dramatic effect.

'Why, Beatrice!' she then cried lightly. 'This is the young woman that I was speaking to you about,' she added turning to Mr. Goldhawke.

'This!' and Barnard was speechless, looking almost stupidly at the apparition before him. 'She is my cousin, and one whom I have been seeking for years,' said he at length, with simple earnestness. 'Her life is on my hands, and you, my Helen, have redeemed it.'

Such ungarbled honesty Helen had hardly looked for, and it farther disquieted her. She affected amazement.

'Why have you never communicated

with me before?' Barnard asked in agitation.

But intercourse under such conditions was impossible, on the interposition of Helen, and Beatrice was allowed to slink away unquestioned. Bee herself was again doubly defeated, and fled as though from the commission of a crime. Barnard could only stand and look after her in what seemed to be a state of mute bewilderment.

Helen's eyes were fixed in scrutiny upon him.

'You can see her at another time,' she said quietly. 'Tell me about it.'

This aroused Barnard, and as they walked onwards he faithfully recounted the tragic freak in which so many years

ago he had been implicated. Helen seemed to hear it with intensest interest.

'It was the first thing to commence the humanising of me,' said Barnard in conclusion. 'I have never been quite the same individual since its occurrence. But it needed one other more vital experience still to complete the regeneration, Helen,' he added with a significant smile towards her. 'But to have poor Bee off my soul will be more of a deliverance than you, dearest, can possibly imagine. Tell me every scrap of this marvellous coincidence.'

But Helen winced under the thought, and hastened to interpose.

'But what will you do for her?'

'Unfortunately only what lucre can do

for her. But with more dignified circumstances her life will acquire dignity. For my sake, Helen, you will assist her in personal ways,—nay, have you not nobly done so?'

Helen turned away to hide the expression of her features. When she refaced him her voice was not to be trusted.

Beatrice fled over the hills with blind precipitancy, scarcely slackening her pace until she reached the moorland house which was her temporary home. Naturally her absence and her condition were misinterpreted, but of that, even if she knew it, she recked but little. All her soul was in such irrepressible turmoil that conscious reflection was

out of the question. That a sight of her cousin should have had such an effect upon her she could not of course have anticipated. All these years had she been convinced of a deadliest hatred, but one word, one glance, had been enough to shatter the illusion. All her old passion was in an instant revived in her. How then could she interpose between him and Helen, whatever the problem betwixt them. He loved her, he must do so; and such sensation could, as it seemed, countenance much.

For two or three weeks after this critical encounter Beatrice was ill, unable to do more than sit solitary amongst the heather in those spring days of sunshine and cloud, lulled by the whisper of the soft

breezes over the fells, or the ceaseless patter of the beck. She had had no kind of communication since, either with her cousin Barnard or with Helen, and even her reflection upon their affairs had assumed but a dull, half-conscious undercurrent in her mind. Her friends in the house had never broached the matter to her, until one day a letter came addressed to Beatrice. One of the girls had brought it up from the post-office after a visit to the village, and Beatrice did not recognise the handwriting. It bore a London postmark, but clearly was not from the journalist. But immediately upon opening it knowledge flashed upon her.

It was a communication from Barnard, mentioning his approaching marriage with

Miss Ilderton, and his wish to signalize the occasion by settling upon his injured cousin a sum equal to the legacy which had been bequeathed to her sister, and that, to effect this purpose, he had given instructions to Messrs. —— and ——, solicitors, who would do anything, etc. In conclusion, Beatrice should hear more from him very soon.

Beatrice replied to such startling news with singular brevity, but pleaded indisposition as an excuse for her pen. In truth, she wrote nothing at all of what she longed to write; naturally the result was disappointing. Indeed, it was not until the receipt of yet another letter on the following day that Beatrice was sufficiently aroused to know what she ought

to have written. This epistle was signed, 'Yours in sincerest gratitude and devotion, Nahum Pildacre.'

The journalist's words seemed at length wholly to awaken Beatrice, and, after she had read them and re-read for one whole day more, things seemed to grow clearer to her. Upon this she wrote a reply, and in it begged Mr. Pildacre to meet her at King's Cross by a certain train on the following day. This despatched, her friends noticed an astonishing change in Beatrice. She did not feel able to disclose anything to them; for, as she knew, her position there was peculiar, and discussion of an urgent kind might have been used. Ultimately she slipped away on an errand to the village and, when

there, left a note for delivery at the shepherd's house. She travelled by the morning train to Blankton, and there she was able to take a ticket direct to King's Cross.

## CHAPTER II.

### FLOOD TIDE.

WHATEVER her previous doubts and repudiations, after that interview with Beatrice, Helen finally recognized her danger. In the first flush of a melodramatic impulse some months ago, it had seemed a trifling matter to override exultantly all human susceptibility, and plan in its despite a scheme of imaginative retribution upon a gross and sordid nature. Helen's

conception of Barnard had then, of course, been purely circumstantial;—of those whom his life had influenced, personal and vehemently sympathetic. However unprincipled in design,—and in principles Helen was ever instinctively a vagabond,—there was a kind of rude justice at the bottom of her scheme. She had seen a girl's life shattered, and her own father unmercifully thrashed, by an arrogant upstart, whose soul knew no level above his money-bags, and for whose humiliation the whole of nature was clamouring: such had been her conception. Of her own immunity from sentimental pit-falls, and her consequent equipment for the office of Nemesis, she had scarcely thought in the connection, so instinctive and unquestioned

an attribute was it. By the time of that accidental encounter with Secroft, however, she was conscious of it, and the confession of her own insensibility was at that time absolutely truthful. That an imminent revolution in her consciousness should have imparted this knowledge to her, she can hardly be blamed for not recognizing.

That she had the physical power of subduing to herself the average male instinct, she had positive proof. If, by a curious exercise of this faculty, she could at once shatter the purse-proud exclusiveness of a man like Barnard Goldhawke by arousing a human passion in him, and frustrate his insatiable commercial ambition by inducing him to marry a pauper,

would not the artistic triumph be a supreme one, and the retribution upon the individual be deservedly overwhelming? Such had been her meditation. Her first intercourse with Barnard had gravely modified the premises as regarded her victim, and subsequent development had blown the retributive fire against the very soul of its wielder.

As soon as Helen was awake to her predicament, every shade of her reflection was radically altered.

She had recognized that she loved this man, and that he had accepted her penniless: might not a method of absolute honesty still reconstitute the relationship and avert all possibility of danger? Latterly she had reassured herself by the

fallacious security of that *after*, when, in the fulness of marriage, passion should annihilate all antecedent alloy; but in returning from her interview with Beatrice she confessed a clearer vision. It must be done before.

In this moment of inspiration Helen dived to the elements of the case, and instantly evolved a resolution. She pondered it throughout the night, and as the first ray of sunlight sparkled in her sleepless eye it was definitely confirmed in her. The outcome was in the first place this, written with accustomed fragrance and charm,

'DEAR MR. GOLDHAWKE,

'I can see no other refuge

than this. By the time you receive this note I shall have left the district, and in bidding you farewell I can only beg you to think as patiently of me as circumstances will permit. I cannot easily think with patience of myself. Let us forget that we have met.

'H. I.'

Having written it, Helen began to pack her trunks.

Even the practical encounters of the morning were unable to influence her resolve, and by the first train she departed. The letter she entrusted to the footman who drove her to the station, and in due course it was delivered at the Pines.

It found Barnard exceptionally elate.

The rupture between Helen and her aristocratic friends had been to him a source of genuine delight; for it had appealed to the exacting jealousy of his passion by making her all the more his own, and it had, moreover, permitted to the lovers greater unconventionality of deportment. Latterly they had, by consent, had meetings every day, and Barnard was on the very point of going forth to the tryst when this bewildering missive was brought to him.

For an instant he stared at it in pallid bewilderment, then himself ran to intercept the servant who had been the messenger. Fortunately sentimental concerns of his own had detained him, and he was found with speed.

'By the first train?' stammered Barnard, heedless of gossip and dignity.

'By the first train, sir.'

'To Blankton?'

The man acquiesced, and heard Barnard clamour for a horse.

In a few moments the household were left at liberty to discuss the situation.

Mr. Goldhawke was not renowned as a rider, but that morning undoubtedly he won his spurs. It was some fifteen miles to Blankton, and he did it within the hour. Owing to the exigencies of branch line travelling, when Barnard strode impetuously on to the railway platform, he found that Helen's train had only preceded him by half-an-hour, and that the London express was not yet signalled.

Accordingly he slunk for a breathing space to the bookstall, refusing even to cast his eyes around him. The observation of some idlers had awakened him, and he easily passed off his emotion as the impetuosity of a traveller. He bought such newspapers as in a normal condition he detested, ignorant even of their titles. Then, with his heart in his throat, he strolled forth to take his critical survey of the surroundings; but a comprehensive glance instantly revealed the barrenness of the outlook. He encountered a porter, to whom his figure was familiar, and the man touched his hat. Barnard turned.

'Isn't Lady Ivelet somewhere about here?' he asked from the inspiration of the instant.

'Not seen her, sir. The young lady came in by——'

'She has not gone on yet?'

'No, sir; going by the express in a minute or two.'

'Oh, thanks.'

The gentleman then stole over to a truck piled with luggage, and afterwards passed on. Whilst at the booking-office, he heard the uproar of a train arriving, and he hurried forth. Helen walked not three yards before him, her face to the train; he checked himself, and followed tremulously. She did not look back, but, upon approaching the carriages, was conducted gallantly by the guard to an empty first-class compartment. Barnard stepped forward, passed off the encounter lightly,

and a word and a touch of the official's hand saw them securely locked in their privacy.

Helen had not spoken, so genuine was the shock to her. She now lay back in a corner of the carriage, simply staring vacantly at the figure opposite, which it was difficult for her not to regard as an imaginary phantom. As his eyes searched her, she closed her lids, and tried to still the throbbing of her brain by an invocation of the calmer reason.

Her flight had only confirmed her resolution. It had all seemed clear. If she simply abandoned her untenable imposition and disappeared into the ignominious depths to which she really appertained, would not his already overwhelming pas-

sion be still further intensified? She fancied his frenzied pursuit of her. His agitated investigation in every quarter; an investigation which she knew could not but speedily result in his discovery of the truth. How that might temporarily affect him she did not care to conjecture; she kept her eyes fixed rather upon the golden horizon beyond, where all these ugly clouds were no more. That his love could survive them she did not for an instant doubt.

Whilst trying to readjust these perceptions, she lost very much of their force; but the conviction remained with her. As she more and more vaguely pondered it the train moved out, and Helen's heart began to beat more quickly.

A sound, and a breath very near her face, startled her, but without movement she opened her eyes. Those of her lover encountered her at but a few inches distance, fixed in solemn intensity upon her own.

'What is this, Helen? I thought it was all concluded.'

'You must release me,' she said, shrinking back, and gently repelling him with the tips of her fingers.

'Never! Now, without you, Helen, my life is a farce.'

'But I require it—I demand it,' she replied, firmly.

He fixed his eyes upon her with what seemed almost a tragic stare; but said nothing. Neither did she speak.

'Will you give me no further reason?'

Had she not already learned something of their power from the tumult in her own breast, this man's gaze must have revealed the appalling nature of the weapons she had so airily wielded. Their very gravity seemed now to exercise a fascination over her, and thereby to make dim and uncertain the spark of common reason which had so recently been kindled. But it was not to be immediately by any means extinguished.

'Simply that our intercourse began under a gross misunderstanding. Something had given you the impression that I was rich. I am not, and——'

'Do you so spurn and disbelieve my

assurance?' cried Barnard, for the first time showing anything approaching anger. 'Am I to repeat that the objection is farcical? It was my own misunderstanding. You never told me that you were rich; you never pretended that you were. If you knew what a hell you raise in me by the mere word—riches! You have driven it out of me; do you try to bring it back, and so shatter all the rest of life that is left for me? I tell you again, Helen, that I can realise of my own at least thirty thousand pounds; is not that enough for two people like ourselves? I want to live, not to——'

Helen had closed her eyes again, and he paused.

Oh, how her tongue struggled for utter-

ance! Would not one word now deliver them for ever from the nightmare? Yes, she would do it.—She sat up and looked at him, as though about to speak. His face softened.

'Well?' he said, and stretched forward for her hand.

'Didn't I tell you that I was rich?'

The pitiful descent shocked her, and all her face coloured.

'You never did, Helen,' he asserted, passionately. 'Certainly, by no word did you ever hint at such a thing to me. Why will you never believe that that word has never arisen in my mind with regard to you? The first glimpse of you gave the death-blow to it. You aroused a wholly new life in me, in which *that* has

no part. You were the first ray of light that has ever crossed my vision; yours the first hand to raise me from the mire. Can you fling me back again into it,—nay, into a thousand times worse than it? Oh, Helen, why do you tantalize me so?'

She had closed her eyes again, if perchance she could but still the throbbing of her brain. 'I am the daughter of Nahum Pildacre who insulted you and whom you thrashed.' The words were red-hot brands upon her soul, but her tongue refused to reveal them. She could not reason upon them. She was only conscious of the maddening struggle in her brain. His pleading intensified it by thrusting that glittering horizon upon her

gaze. Was not that life which he held out, a thousand times more to her than it ever could be to him? Could she by a word imperil it? Across its fair expanse Nahum Pildacre had now irrevocably thrust himself. She stared at it and him; and, more than ever before, the contrast was hideously clear. It, for the first time, revolted her artistic perception, and she became more and more convinced that the confession could not now be made. Nay, the very name Pildacre disclosed unsuspected ignobilities, incongruities, which made her blush for shame. But his love——

Helen looked again, and instantly felt herself clasped in his embrace.

'I pursued you, Helen. All fault is mine.'

He continued to pour soothing and tender words into her ear, with such genuine abandonment of passion, that Helen, unnerved by her unaccustomed struggle, relinquished herself for a time to the pure ecstasy of the emotional current.

But even still it was not a placid one. The struggle between genuine love for him,—hence sensibility to his emotions,—and that life which was to open for herself, was not to be so easily extinguished. But his love was surely overwhelmingly ample. Why could she could not trust it? Why was she even yet so conscious that she ought now at this instant to trust it, and as conscious that she dared not? Pildacre—Pildacre? Nay, it had now be-

come ridiculous, contemptible ; and Helen knew that she should not confess it.

Nevertheless, a victory was by no means gained. The train was slackening for a station, and Helen gently released herself from her lover's arm. In a minute or two they entered York.

Here was a brief pause, and Barnard found no difficulty in inducing Helen to take a glass of wine. The momentary deliverance from the narrow compass of the railway-carriage seemed to revive the young lady, and her face brightened as she passed amidst the exhilarating scene of the capacious station. Barnard, ever alert to the most trivial changes in her, noted it instantly, and felt a corresponding elation in himself.

'Helen, Helen, you are incorrigible,' he whispered, pinching her arm as he thrust open the swinging-door for her.

They were again seated, and the aspect of both of them was altered. Helen continued unusually sedate; but that the spiritual perplexity which had assailed her was in process of simplification, there was ample evidence. They had bought some fresh papers, and as, side by side, they looked at the pictures Helen's vivacity and humour showed signs of reawakening. Barnard incited her to their indulgence, for there was a piquancy about her intellectual playfulness which he found extraordinarily delightful. Under it he found glimpses of a future existence to which he

was definitely aroused, and which to the eyes of a convert inevitably assumed quite dazzling proportions.

Of this existence he was very fond of talking, none the less so, perhaps, because he found it to awaken an echo in the mind of his companion. The enlarged horizon to which Helen's own revolution had aroused her was, if she had been able to perceive it, perhaps the most potent factor of the situation at present; so far, that is, as Helen's personal development was concerned. Without the initial tenderness to Goldhawke as an individual, it would not have attained this position no doubt; but, now that it had attained it, even the subject of it herself was not in the least aware of the exclusive part

it was in danger of assuming in her insecurely balanced mental constitution. True, the spiritual complacency in Barnard's passionate devotion precluded all conscious analysis of his subtle characteristics, and it never for an instant occurred to Helen to question closely the joint current to which they sped. But this only argued the sincerity of her own affection: her consciousness was mainly merged in it.

But it is possible too that that intrusive skeleton played a part also in this. It seemed a trumpery thing, certainly, under this accession of spirits; but it was there.

Pictures and papers soon tired, and the individual spirit came forth again.

Barnard had held his companion's hand—gloved as it was. Now he rubbed and pinched the leather impatiently. Presently he trifled with the numerous buttons, counting them with his finger tips like musical notes. Then he undid one, and let his finger burrow into the inadequate gap. Another gave way, and another; so at last the white wrist peeped out. Barnard traced the thin blue lines with his nail, and talked.

'We will travel, Helen. This mere movement seems to have an exhilarating effect. It has cured you even,' he said, examining the change in her features which was noticeable enough. 'Hasn't it, Helen? Speak, dear girl.'

She looked round from the window,

smiling benignly. Yes, the cloud had left her face undoubtedly.

'I feel better, through you,' she said, pretending to resent his manipulation of her glove, for now half her hand was naked. But he held it, and continued his tender task.

'How on earth can you get them on? . . . But are you awake, Helen, to what you had intended? To what you had nearly done to me?' he went on, with gathering gravity, tremulously fondling her uncovered hand.

She looked out in silence. The skeleton was waning, and only a soothing acquiescence in the ecstatic present was able to persuade her. A sanguine confidence now seemed to turn this erratic effort into a

freak of madness. What if she had escaped—had really lost him? He might not have pursued her: who could say?

'Your action convinces me. I was wrong.'

'If I could tell you how wrong! It is a common phrase, but mine means more than commonly, when I say that all my life henceforth is built upon you—you alone. You have severed me from the old one; you must conduct me through the new. Without you, Helen, I should collapse.'

She thought he clutched her hand convulsively, but it only established her confidence; only drove that shivering skeleton far into the shade. She only pressed his hand, but it was enough for him.

'You make a solemn promise to me, Helen? . . . . But why should we not be married at once?'

'Some little preparation is necessary—'

'Yes, yes: forgive me,' he exclaimed, as though to deprecate all appearance of an indelicate impetuosity. 'But, Helen, you will promise never to——'

She returned his full fixed gaze, clearly and fearlessly.

'I will never leave you,' she repeated. 'And I will marry you as soon as we are prepared.'

Barnard kissed her hand, and launched once more into that imaginative future which made the world for him.

All Helen's misgivings were dissipated, and as he talked ardently of the pilgrimage

before them, she lay back in the corner, lulled by the passionate music of his voice, and rhythmic beating of the train.

It was her hand collapsing as he held it that told him that she slept, and he turned so that he might see her face.

As the train stopped, Helen suddenly awoke, with words upon her lips.

'Oh, nothing,' she laughed in answer to his enquiry. 'I was only dreaming.'

But Helen was aware that 'Yes, afterwards,' had been the words.



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## CHAPTER III.

### MOBILIZATION.

Mr. Pildacre was pushing his way eagerly amongst the throng which the arrival of a train from the North occasioned on the platform, gazing anxiously into faces which could by any possibility belong to a young woman of about the age of thirty. The appearance of the journalist was in no way altered, save that on this particular evening his features were set in

an expression of unusual gravity. He had almost accosted one or two passengers completely strange to him before he actually alighted upon the one of whom he was legitimately in search.

A cry of 'Ha!', a beaming countenance, and a firm grip of the fingers was Mr. Pildacre's greeting of Beatrice.

'Luggage in the front? I will see——'

'No, no, Mr. Pil——' cried the traveller after the departing figure. 'I have no luggage at all. This umbrella is all.'

'All!' was the astonished response. 'You travel in comfort, Miss Bee! ha, ha!' and the journalist indulged in a laugh at his own pleasantry.

The good man displayed his paternal tenderness towards Beatrice by a multi-

plicity of delicate little attentions; was ecstatic over her improved looks; glad she had come; but it was not difficult to see that there was a measure of uneasiness in reserve. As for Beatrice, despite the marvellous accession of peace and restfulness which proximity to the journalist inevitably brought to her, she could speak to him but little. As the cab rattled over the stones from the station to Nahum's Marylebone apartments, not half-a-dozen words were exchanged. Once there, and seated to the meal which even a pseudo-bachelor's thoughtfulness had provided, they both discovered their inability to touch it. Then Pildacre rose impulsively from his chair.

'What have you come for, Miss Cross-

ley?' he stammered, with his hand upon his forehead.

'They are to be married next week?'

'But you——'

'Ye-es, I am determined to stop it. I am sure there is something wrong. He does not know who she is.'

The journalist stared at his companion in considerable agitation.

'We have no——'

'It is our duty to stop it, Mr. Pildacre,' proceeded Beatrice, vehemently, 'or at least to make sure that he knows who he is marrying. You must do it, my dear friend, for there are reasons which prevent my taking a direct part.'

'But, Miss Beatrice, I cannot see——'

'I have thought and thought of it

lately, and I believe I can understand it partly now. Helen is a dreadful girl. You know the will, and about the marriage of the richest . . . She hates him so, has hated him since he—he came to you that night . . . She wants to deceive him ; she has made him think that she is rich. Oh, it is horrible!'

'I can hardly conceive all this,' said Nahum, absently.

'But it must be so. How dare she treat him so, if he loves her? It would be wicked—yes, wicked to him. He thinks she is rich, and you know she is penniless.'

'If she is penniless, how has she done all this?' was the journalist's feeble remonstrance.

'Do you think that she loves him?' almost shrieked the young woman at him.

'I cannot. The whole is a mystery to me.'

'Yes, it was to me, but . . . I see it now. It is just like Helen. She often said to me that it would be fun to make a great play with real people for the actors, and I believe this is what she has done. I ought to have thought of it all before.'

'I cannot think that all this is possible, Miss Bee.'

But he was received with a repetition of his visitor's vehement entreaty,—vehemence which had been gathering and gathering upon itself throughout several

hours in the railway, until now at last it was verging upon hysteria.

'You can stop it, Mr. Pildacre,' was her constant cry.

'How can I?' was his perplexed inquiry.

'You must go to him; you must tell him.'

'I—to him!' vociferated the journalist in a tone to frighten Beatrice. 'Never! never!'

'Then to her. See her; implore her not to destroy her own life and the life of this man, who, whatever he has been, is, I am sure, altered now.'

'But, my good girl, I don't know where she is. She writes to me through a lawyer.'

'Still?'

'Yes, still, and she—but I can write to her.'

The excessive emotion of Beatrice and the gravely ethical aspect which she had been able to bring to the affair, really made Pildacre extremely uncomfortable, and he felt it a duty to do something. He could indeed write to her, and the thought was relieving.

'Yes, write to her instantly, and tell her that if she—she—that in spite of everything, I will write to *him*.'

Beatrice here fell to weeping outright.

Any action, however insignificant, was a relief to the journalist, and he sat to the table instantly. He scribbled a very sincere appeal to his daughter, urging her

as she loved him, not to bring such dishonour upon his house, if indeed there was a shadow of foundation for their suspicions, which he personally could scarcely be persuaded; and above all imploring her to grant him but one interview. Beatrice was moderately composed when he had finished, and she highly approved of the effort. So they went out together to post it, and during the rest of the evening found some degree of calmness.

In the evening of the next day the reply came, and these were the words of it:

'Dear Father,

'I have just got your extraordinary note, and can only scribble a few

words to it, as I am on the point of going out of town. This action of yours and Beatrice's amazes me, but, to show you how grossly you are mistaken, I am quite willing that you should both see Mr. Goldhawke and myself personally, so that you may offer any objections that occur to you. As Mr. G. is now in Paris, and as I shall be away for some days, I cannot fix a day earlier than Tuesday next for the meeting.

'If you will both come to the —— Hotel at 12.30 on that day, we shall be happy to receive you.

'Yours as ever,

'H.'

Beatrice read it tremulously, whilst

the journalist was becoming positively jocular.

'The best revenge I have ever heard of,' cried he; 'positively *the* precedent upon vengeance. Love, Miss Bee,' added Nahum, solemnly, 'love will do anything. Why, even I——'

But he roared with laughter, and said no more.

'Am I mistaken?' was all that Beatrice could repeat.

'Mistaken? Ha, ha! Read it again, old—— ha! read it again. Now, what is your constron of the words?'

'When is the wedding?'

'Thursday, ha! ha! Come, construe, I say.'

'Love . . . . .' mused Beatrice, just audibly.

'Love omnipotent, undoubtedly; but—but—— Don't you see how you have wronged her? There are fair means as well as foul. Love has conquered, as it ever must. Through love comes—don't you see?'

Beatrice did not see, and, although she could not say so, her features showed it.

'The apology, of course!' roared Pildacre.

'Do you think that?'

'Think it! Isn't it as plain as an obtrusive quadrat? Isn't it?'

'He may love her,' mused her prosaic obstinacy: 'but she——'

'Coals of fire, Miss Beatrice. You know nothing of human nature. I expect he is not half a bad fellow.'

'You are wiser than I,' she reluctantly admitted, 'so I suppose I must give in.'

For the next few days Mr. Pildacre devoted himself, in a state of youthful exhilaration, to showing Beatrice some of the diversions of the town, and they began to think that they were happy.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FROM BOTH SIDES.

After that casual encounter with Helen and Barnard on the road, Beatrice did not seek to see either of them again, nor had Helen held any kind of communication with her friend. It is possible, as Beatrice had proved so very much less amenable to reason than anybody previously familiar with her might have expected, that Helen had had to alter her tactics, rather than

run the risk of adding yet another element of complication to her design.

As a result of the understanding arrived at between Mr. Goldhawke and Helen in the train, they had in joint discussion resolved that the latter should forthwith retire to an eligible private apartment, and that after a brief interval for necessary preparations they should be quietly married. That supreme moment arrived at, Mr. Goldhawke talked of completing his steps for deliverance from all the concerns of commerce, and in the first place spending a regenerative year or two abroad. All this Helen approved with such undemonstrative mien, as could not fail to elicit a jocular remark from her lover.

'It is like going to execution after all, Helen, isn't it?'

But she only responded by taking his hand in silence.

Helen's parting with Lady Ivelet was by no means an unkindly one. Each was fully aware of her present need of, as well as past indebtedness to, the other's forbearance, and their mutual complaisance acknowledged it. The younger, in her regenerate state, feeling something of the moral enormity to which her instincts had subjected her, had at the last moment even gone farther than this tacit acknowledgment. Her last speech had been this,—

'Good-bye, Lady Ivelet. I repeat that you have been kind to me. I shall always

remain inexplicable to you, I have no doubt; but to prove, by the only way that ever will be in my power, that my temperament is not wholly sordid, the day, I think, will come when I shall beg the right of making material reparation for the social inconveniences I have been the means of bringing upon you.'

Lady Ivelet bowed graciously and made her adieu, and neither lady was again to set eyes upon the other.

The stimulating atmosphere of the town exercised considerable influence upon Helen. She was able to throw off very much of the extraordinary fit of introspection to which her pastoral experiences had for the first time in life really awakened

her, and feel a more buoyant and sanguine confidence in the general current of events. Mr. Goldhawke overwhelmed her with the most delicate and passionate attentions, if at times he drove her to feverish disquietude by his deliberately nonchalant, unquestioning faith in her. In some moods this only confirmed Helen's most sanguine confidence, but at other times it agitated her like a nightmare.

One morning Barnard arrived to conduct Helen to the Academy; for, despite their social experience in the north, it was no part of their intention to slink through the remainder of life in the byeways. They should exact no social concessions in any quarter, and certainly none would gratuitously be extended towards them;

but their purse was at least their own, and upon that they not unreasonably intended hitherto to base their joint life, in such manner as seemed best to themselves, and in complete indifference to anything that had gone before. Their situation, at least, gave them this advantage, that they at any rate had nothing socially to lose, even should any supercilious eye in public detect them, and direct the shaft of a contemptuous or a malicious tongue.

They went in the orthodox way along the pictures, and for any which elicited remarks of particular approbation from Helen, Barnard immediately put down his name, altogether regardless of the figure which might be appendant. Her remarks about the painting fascinated and exhila-

rated him, for laying no sort of claim to intellectual or artistic qualifications in himself, he yet had a desperate appreciation of such accomplishments, and that they were such a pronounced possession of his bride-elect was a matter of inordinate pride to him. Her manner with him, too, was so incomparably considerate: neither by the most distant hint presupposing his ignorance, or reflecting her own superior parts.

For the first time in the whole of her course of nearly twenty years, Helen was now taking life seriously. She began to discern some of its latent capabilities in addition to the merely spectacular which had hitherto exclusively engaged her. This young woman was by no means

deficient in intellect, but it seemed as though rational play had been denied to it, until some potent agency had been able to imbue her with a human tincture. In her present mood, for instance, Helen looked out upon the world of art with a new enthusiasm. It made a definite, almost mystical, appeal to her in this strangely altered aspect, suggesting for the first time to her the fervid afflatus of an emotional religion.

Not only did she talk ardently to Barnard of their future travels and intellectual enterprise, but in her private moments she pondered the subject with tremulous exhilaration. Nay, her conscious ambitions became by this means awakened; all the energy which she had hitherto devoted to

mere theatric gesticulation, having, as it seemed, diverted itself into the more substantial and more dignified domains of creative art. It is not that Helen was aware at this stage of definite creative impulse, but fiery, if vague, aspirations inflamed her, suggesting a more essentially spiritual capacity than she had at any other time suspected.

Reflections of this kind, in those days preceding her marriage, frequently engrossed Helen, and not unnaturally they resolutely assailed her this morning amongst the pictures.

When Goldhawke was beside her they merely served to stimulate her brilliant powers of conversation, but when for a moment he had left her and she reclined

gracefully in a seat, she lapsed into abstract meditation.

She could not have indulged such absent fit for many minutes, when she was aroused from it by the impression of a gentleman standing beside her, and arose to rejoin her companion almost without looking. On the point of speaking to him she looked more consciously and beheld, not Mr. Barnard Goldhawke as she had expected, but her former admirer, Mr. Saltway.

Helen was taken aback for an instant, but the friendly smile of the gentleman and his hand extended re-assured her. They shook hands and were seated.

'You are alone, Miss Ilderton?'

Mr. Goldhawke's absence was explained to him.

'Forgive me, then, if I unceremoniously snatch the moment to ask if you have heard from a Mr. Secroft, a solicitor in Wallborough.'

'Heard from him? No. I don't quite understand.'

'Only that he has been twice to my chambers seeking importunately for your whereabouts, in which, of course, I have not been able to help him. You will excuse my mentioning it. As I have encountered you so unexpectedly, it seemed best.'

'Thank you.'

'Rather a good display this year,' proceeded Charles, quite naturally: and Bar-

nard returning, found them talking of the pictures.

The only one of the three to experience restraint was Mr. Saltway, and in him it arose mainly from the unwelcome discovery that the beautiful figure before him was able to resuscitate his tender emotions. The wisdom of the man Goldhawke once more impressed him, and perhaps not more his wisdom than his blest and enviable fortune. Why, even here she seemed made for distinction, let her extraction or her ethics be what they might.

Barnard, any more than Helen, did not recognise the slightest cause for discomposure, but felt, rather, able to extend a patronising affability to his defeated rival. He entered immediately into the conver-

sation which was proceeding, and when Charles felt constrained to take to flight, Goldhawke begged him not to ignore a poor bachelor's quarters. Saltway promised to call, and they parted.

This interview wrought no noticeable change in Helen, and her sparking humour and criticism proceeded as before. When Barnard had later in the day unwillingly left her, he was reflecting that this day out of all the exhilarating ones which had preceded it, marked perhaps the acme of his existence hitherto. Life grew large before him.

It was in the seclusion of her own chamber that Helen came to regard the experiences of the morning under another aspect. Towards Mr. Saltway she had

felt kindly; more particularly so in the earlier part of their intercourse, when she could raise him into a pleasant ideal contrast to the grim creation which the name of Barnard Goldhawke had assumed in her imagination and made into an actual faction in her life. Later, Charles came to be viewed with a modified regard, but still with nothing short of particular kindliness. At his ungallant withdrawal, Helen could afford to look with a lenient eye.

Now Mr. Clement Secroft had ever held a very different, and indeed quite unique, place in Helen's mind, and it was the unexpected introduction of his name at the present juncture which now gave the tone to this review. Helen's own experiences

had vastly modified her estimate of the sentimental solicitor, and she could not think of him now with the nonchalant half-patronising, mainly quizzical diversion that had surrounded his enthusiasm hitherto. Never at any previous moment of her existence had she been able to construe his sentiments in such a vividly imaginative light, and the novel construction was not calculated to impart exceptional serenity of soul.

It was not now gratifying to Helen to contemplate this man of undeniably generous and chivalrous heart,—however deficient in the robuster qualities,—pursuing with a self-sacrificing ardour his elusive phantom from day to day. There was no misunderstanding the gravity of

his affection now, nor yet of disguising her own misleading attitude towards it; misleading in the light of more recent development, if not consciously so at the time of perpetration. His last passionate words played uneasily about her, and the expression of the features which had accompanied them. In the view of her present realization of such feeling, how was she to regard her own previous trading upon it in him,—in order to effect, not apparently the merely histrionic retaliation which was undoubtedly the original motive of her action, but rather the exclusive promotion of her own spiritual and material well-being. Infantile as such moral consideration would have once been to her, Helen now found it a

very appreciable element in the reflection.

At first she thought of forthwith communicating with Clement Secroft, and revealing the subtle difficulties of the situation; but the explanatory letter was no sooner written than even this extraordinarily decisive Helen was seized with a fit of irresolution. Needless to say that the letter was ultimately destroyed. Their connection had better remain unmistakably commercial, and from the point of view of commerce, Helen could confidently resolve that nobody should be a loser by her. Only a few more days now and she would be in possession of the compensating medium, for Barnard was lavishly generous. In fact, it was only Helen herself who restrained him.

One day, which they were spending as usual together,—they chanced to be crossing the grass of Hyde Park,—Barnard disclosed an intention.

'My letter has gone to poor Beatrice,' he said, with some apparent shame-facedness. 'I decided upon ten thousand, the same as her sister Gertrude. Do you approve of it, dearest?'

'It is very generous and right of you,' Helen replied, with her eyes seeking some object afar.

'And now, Helen, you will permit me to settle at least the same upon you? You can no longer refuse it.'

'You know my unalterable resolution. If you love me you will settle no farthing upon me until we have been seven days

married. After that you may do whatever you desire.'

'Scrupulous, sensitive darling,' laughed the other, and once again gave way.

Once again the prospect of that after time could raise an occasional tremor in Helen. It was impossible to feel the smallest doubt upon the point of his sincerity of devotion; but the same misgiving, which had so persistently caused the postponement of the one remaining revelation, haunted that otherwise serene horizon. It was not reflection and argument which could induce the small cloud; indeed, those were the never failing agents of its dissipation. It was merely a scarce conscious impression of instinct which was able to assert itself at moments of exceptional susceptibility.

It was merely as a step of self-preparation that Helen communicated to her father the fact of the near approach of her marriage. She was in herself determined not to allow the complete divulgence of her uneasy secret to be deferred beyond the day of that vital experience, but even yet she had not matured in any details her scheme for the inevitable disclosure. The astonishing response from the journalist gave her instantaneous resolution.

The day before she received that letter, Barnard had gone over to Paris on some errand of preparation for their joint journey thither, and that saved Helen from what she came to think would have been unduly precipitate action. Had he been coming that day to see her, she was con-

vinced that some impulse would have compelled her to place her father's letter in the hands of her lover and await confidently the issue.

The journalist had written thus :

'HELEN, my girl,

'Do, I entreat you, enlighten your perplexed father. Your friend Beatrice has arrived here in a state of feverish anxiety, proclaiming all kinds of mishap and dishonour as imminent from some project of yours. Difficult as it is for me to believe it, your letter sustains the gloomy misgivings ; but if your zeal should have enticed you into any questionable proceedings, I implore you perpend. Comedy, my girl, is good ; but in this

device I am asked to perceive ignominious Tragedy. As you love me, desist. It is difficult to suppose that there is not some obvious deliverance from our suspicions, but at all costs have regard to our house. It is humble, God knows, but as yet of a record unsullied. In conclusion, I beseech you to let me have a few words with you when and how you shall propose.

'In much perplexity and consternation,

'Affectionately your father,

'NAHUM PILDACRE.'

After an hour or two's reflection, the irritant qualities of the appeal triumphed, and when Helen sent the reply to her father she was undisguisedly angry.

## CHAPTER V.

### FACE TO FACE.

That Tuesday morning broke brilliantly over the town, and by mid-day every brick and stone gave back the heat to a long-suffering population. As Beatrice, in discomfort and trepidation, looked from time to time upon the parched, dusty street from her window, she thought with tender longing of the far away farmhouse in the midst of its fresh and fragrant sea of

heather, and she more than once wished that her strength had never permitted her to escape from that secluded shelter. Here so much of her old sensations of the weariness of life returned to her, but with redoubled intensity, and with a nervous misgiving as to the part to be played by herself in it.

'I think we had better not go, after all, Mr. Pildacre,' she exclaimed at one moment, turning abruptly from the window.

'Not—go, Miss Bee!' returned the other, with his eyes momentarily uplifted from the watch that he was holding.

'Oh, yes, we must. I wish it was time.'

Mr. Pildacre silently pondered, for now

that the consummation was so near he was not in a talkative mood.

In another part of the town time was passing more rapidly. As the church clocks struck twelve, Helen, in the company of Mr. Goldhawke, was driving towards the hotel at which the meeting had been appointed, the gentleman at any rate as it seemed in even more than his customary jubilant spirits. Helen was much less demonstrative, being greatly inclined to the meditative. She was much paler than was her wont. Barnard did not fail to notice every slightest alteration in the features he so passionately adored, and he naturally made their present expression a subject of tenderest raillery.

'Are you not overcome yet, my beautiful, sensitive Helen? Can I give you yet further proof of my impregnable devotion?'

'Yes, one further proof,' she said, with a nervous smile. 'It is immediately before us.'

'My own father worked as a mere mechanic in a factory, mind,' returned Goldhawke hilariously.

'They say that a woman imperils the whole of her existence by permitting a man to make any great sacrifice for her. The acquisition so soon becomes ludicrously inadequate.'

'Helen, I will not hear such words. You forget that I never in my life loved a woman until I was thirty. Surely such

an experience is vital. That its effect upon me has been vital you will scarcely deny.'

'But it is an enormous property.'

'You wrong me, my darling—wife,' he added in a passionate undertone. 'You disbelieve me——'

'No, no, I cannot,' replied Helen with a tremulous vehemence. 'You have said that you can forgive me everything.'

'Everything that *you* can have done, I can,' he asserted strenuously, and they relapsed into silence.

When in the privacy of the richly upholstered apartment, Helen's restlessness increased. She walked from one window to another, and plucked at the ferns and flowers, or smoothed the leaves between

her fingers. Barnard sat eyeing her soberly, presuming that such was the inevitable effect upon women.

'Do not distress yourself, my dearest, I do implore you.'

'I ought to have insisted upon this interview before,' replied Helen.

'And what on earth is your father, that you can be so disturbed about it? Is he a convict, and will he come here in the company of warders? I can stand even that, if he is not to be an everyday acquaintance.'

'Perhaps worse than that,' muttered Helen. 'But you will see—he ought to be here now,' and she looked at the clock.

At the same moment there was a knock

at the door, and Helen sank colourless in a chair.

'Well?'

'Somebody to see Miss Ilderton, sir.'

'Then let somebody wait,' uttered Barnard gruffly; 'here, pour me out some brandy.'

Barnard knelt beside Helen with tenderest affection. Her frame quivered, but she gently thrust him away and took a sip of the stimulant. In a few seconds she was better.

'Let them come in,' she whispered to Barnard. 'We had better have it over.'

'I shall send him away. I shall not allow you to see anybody now.'

'Yes, yes; ring, please.'

He still demurred, but Helen herself stepped to the bell.

Helen stood upon one side of the hearth rug with the fingers of one hand resting upon the mantelpiece. Mr. Goldhawke stood, looking at her, on the other side, as Beatrice and the journalist were shown into the room. Despite the comforting theory which Mr. Pildacre had so resolutely constructed, he was extremely uncomfortable in his present position, and although he had most thoroughly wiped and re-wiped his features in ascending the staircase, the perspiration now again fell from his temples. He bowed silently when at length Barnard turned in his direction. No word came from anybody,

nor, with the exception of the journalist, did anybody stir. Goldhawke simply stared in blank amazement from Helen to Pildacre, and from Pildacre to Helen again. Beatrice had shrunk into the background.

'This man is your father,' muttered Barnard, when he was able.

'He is,' replied Helen firmly, and felt the confirmation of her most disquieting instinct.

'Beatrice is right, then,' mused the discomfited Nahum, and his heart beat violently.

Barnard felt a singular inability to collect himself, so as to assume a definite attitude to the assembly. He was simply stupefied with sheer amazement. The

sudden combination of two so utterly incompatible associations had only been effected by explosives of silent agency, and a wholly new product was the result of it. His angry antagonism to Pildacre had long been extinct, (as any conscious perturbation, at any rate,) but for the man to be so unexpectedly thrust upon him in such startling relationship, was enough to arouse in an exaggerated form the latent repugnance. When Barnard was at all conscious of mental emotion he found it all to centre in the maddening sting which the inoffending journalist's presence inflicted upon him. Even Helen's figure could only appear dimly to him through that. On a second glance he could convince himself that Nahum's

features betrayed a simpering satisfaction.

'What is the meaning of this?' exclaimed Goldhawke hoarsely at length, his eyes turned partly to Helen.

She simply indicated her father.

'He will tell you.'

Helen had completely regained physical composure, but her features remained colourless.

'Yes, sir, I will tell you,' began the journalist, rising energetically to the occasion. 'I thought it possible that you might have been prepared for this interview, but I see that I was mistaken. It must therefore be unpleasant for both of us. This is entirely of my seeking. I beg that the whole of the blame attaching to

this extraordinary proceeding may fall upon my shoulders,—mine alone.'

The innocent journalist's oratorical demeanour was unfortunately calculated to inflame Barnard.

'Confound it, sir, what are you here for?' demanded the latter, vehemently.

'In your interests, Mr. Goldhawke; solely in your interests, and that of public morality. So I must beg you to be patient. You are about to marry that lady——'

'About to!'

'Do you know who she is?'

'Oh, it is wicked,' moaned Beatrice.

'I have a painful impression, sir,' proceeded Pildacre, with extraordinary composure, 'that you have been imposed

upon. You will doubtless suppose me to be at the bottom of the imposture, but I scorn the imputation, sir. In spite of your undisguised aversion for me, I take leave to say that I am an honourable man, and that I will be no party to a diabolical plot for the destruction of the whole of your future life. This young woman, who has imposed upon you, is, as she has admitted, *my* daughter, sir, *my* daughter, and must be penniless. If knowing that, you still——'

Goldhawke's appearance, with his fingers clutching spasmodically at his breast, alarmed the journalist, and he paused.

'Anybody but his,' muttered Barnard, as he turned his eyes slowly towards Helen. Instantly lowering his gaze, he took up

the wine-glass which still contained some brandy, and drank off the contents,—then flung the glass amongst the ferns in the fire-place.

Beatrice was by the doorway, and as Goldhawke passed her in agitation to leave the room, his eyes rested upon her for an instant, and he said,

'A pretty scheme of vengeance!'

She moved in terror to the journalist, but the door had closed and her cousin gone.

Pildacre placed Beatrice in a chair, and turned to face his daughter.

'Helen,' he said, in tones of genuine authority, 'this was an awful thing you were going to do.'

'Going to do?' she returned, absently.

'The worst is now over,' she added, with a deep sigh. 'We had better separate.'

'Oh, Helen, my girl——' but his daughter checked him.

'Not yet, father. I will see you when we are all calmer. I am going north by the two o'clock train. Will you come with me, Beatrice?'

But Beatrice again shrank back speechless.

'Helen, Helen, why have you done this?' repeated her father, distractedly. 'If you have let us thwart you——'

'Thwart me? Father, he is my husband; we were married this morning.'

And, as Helen left the room, two other figures entered it past her, but she did did not raise her eyes to them. Beatrice,

however, looking after the departing Helen, saw Mr. Philip Goldhawke and Clement Secroft standing before her.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TEST.

PHILIP'S first impulse was to glance quickly round the room, and inquire, 'What the deuce is the meaning of all this?' All Secroft's attention, on the other hand, was required for the half-open door which screened that retreating figure. Whilst Philip began further to interrogate the dumbfoundered journalist, Clement disappeared.

Mr. Pildacre explained, as coherently as he was able, the circumstances as he understood them. Philip nodded his assent in the course of the narrative, muttering, 'Secroft was right, then.' At one point he threw a glance at Beatrice, having then for the first time really noticed her presence. The journalist's narrative instantly ceased for him.

Stepping hurriedly forward, Philip took both Beatrice's hands between his own, and looked in mute astonishment into her tear-stained face.

'There is no end to marvels!' he exclaimed, when he was able. 'I believe the whole affair is a piece of magic. Where on earth have you sprung from?'

Beatrice, taking the situation more gravely than he did, could not answer.

'You are not implicated in this?'

To which came a vehement negative.

It fell to the journalist also to elucidate this new phase of the astounding transaction in his own magniloquent manner, in the course of which Beatrice, more than once, changed colour.

It was whilst Mr. Pildacre was holding forth on this topic that Secroft, with countenance of tragic dejection, re-entered the room.

'We can do nothing?' said Philip to him, aside.

'Nothing at all. They are married.'

Philip was the only one in any condition to take command of the company's move-

ments, and he first of all proposed that they should all have luncheon. Secroft disdained any such indelicate requirements, as did also Beatrice.

'Then, Mr. Pildacre, it is you and I,' said Goldhawke. 'Let us go down to the dining-room.'

The journalist could see no reason for spurning such a very sensible suggestion, and expressed a ready acquiescence. But he looked uneasily at Beatrice.

'You had better reconsider, Miss Beatrice,' he diffidently suggested. 'The physical system, you know——'

Philip laughed outright, and Secroft hurriedly took his leave, resisting all efforts at kindly pressure.

'Another candidate, I fear,' commented

the facetious gentleman, when they were descending the staircase.

Nahum's spirits, under this humorous presentment, became marvellously lightened, and he began to think that the universe might, after all, possibly survive this appalling indiscretion of his daughter. Beatrice, too, gave way to a treacherous ray of hope, even if she was able to cut but an indifferent figure at the table.

Philip's curiosity being fully aroused, Pildacre was easily induced to narrate the history of his daughter, skilfully presenting it in as propitiatory a manner as he was able, and, as regarded the gentlemen at any rate, more agreeably than might have been expected.

Afterwards Philip sought his cousin for

a few words in private, in order to inquire after her position and prospects. He began by insisting upon her coming down with him to Grove House, where he and his wife Gertrude were at present staying with a view to a final ordering of the family's affairs. This, however, Beatrice stoutly resisted.

'It is very kind of you, but I am rich now.'

'You are!' exclaimed Philip, perhaps unintentionally glancing at her unostentatious garments.

She told him of Barnard's behaviour to her, and the other gave a long, loud whistle.

'He's a better fellow than I ever thought him,' said Philip, frankly.

'He is,' assented Beatrice, with warmth.

Ultimately Philip had to acquiesce in his cousin's desire to return with Mr. Pildacre, who she said had been nothing short of a father to her; she further expressed it as her intention to travel northwards on the following day.

'Will they go to the Pines, do you think?'

'I expect so. Helen at least will do so.'

'H'm. I must see Barnard.'

Philip left town again by an afternoon train.

The altered aspect of affairs which the younger Goldhawke's levity had been able to present to Mr. Pildacre remained with him, despite the less

buoyant attitude of his companion, Beatrice. Towards the latter the journalist was solicitously deferent, although doing his utmost to impart some of his own sanguine mood.

'Love, you know, Miss Bee, is a great matter,' he would say, confidentially, 'and that Mr. Goldhawke was affected with *that*, I think we shall not have to dispute. When he has adjusted himself to the shock, your humble, insignificant servant will vanish from the consideration. My daughter Helen has a personality which can assert itself.'

'Yes, I think—I hope so,' would be Beatrice's comment.

But Mr. Pildacre did not trust wholly to his own resources. It seemed to him,

and not unwisely, that moderate recreation would be the best tonic for Beatrice, and with this view he conducted her upon this and the following two days to some of the less exacting diversions of the metropolis. They visited the Tower and contemplated armour, and the Crown jewels; St. Paul's, the National Gallery, and the Abbey, combining pleasure and profit in a wholly unexceptionable manner. One effect, at least, of this treatment was that Beatrice's estimate of Mr. Pildacre's extraordinary scholarship and gallantry was not merely confirmed, but immeasurably extended. And the best of it was, that the journalist perceived it, and felt jubilant accordingly.

Unfortunately Nahum discovered that such Elysium was not for his everyday disporting. His companion did not waver in her intention of a further interview with Helen, nor disguise her anxiety to be forthwith preparing for it. From this Mr. Pildacre was unable to dissuade her, howsoever vigorously he pleaded, so at last he too had to acquiesce.

The next morning consequently saw them upon the platform of King's Cross. They had been pacing to and fro in fragmentary conversation for some time before it was necessary for Beatrice to take her seat. The journalist was obviously suffering from temporary depression, but his eyes frequently rested in kindness upon the figure beside him. Every attention that

is possible to man upon such occasion did Nahum render to his tremulous charge, many of them, indeed, several times over.

But the dreaded moment came. The train was in readiness, and those who were anxious to see the last of departing friends, stood back from the carriage. Opposite to a third-class doorway stood Pildacre, (habit was strong in Beatrice, and she could not otherwise travel,) with his eyes fixed upon his particular passenger. Some sudden movement on her part aroused corresponding one in him, and looking round, he saw a gentleman dart forward to the train, and get unceremoniously huddled into a compartment. Pildacre stepped forward to whisper—

'Stand back, sir!' was officially vociferated, and the train moved slowly away.

It was by no means a quieting thought to Beatrice to know that Barnard was but a carriage or two off. The glimpse of him, momentarily though it had been, was enough to give a disturbing reality to all her late imaginary glimpses which had so persistently haunted her since his last look at the hotel. In this new phase the journalist was speedily forgotten, and the vague forward rose in ominous gloom ahead. Beatrice argued it this way and that, but to the gloom she constitutionally reverted. So far as mere probabilities were concerned, it seemed as likely that Barnard's intentions were pacific as that they should

be directed towards a widening of the breach.

Beatrice worked herself into a fever through those long hours that she was in the train. Once,—it was during the stoppage at York—the tension became so intolerable that she got out with the purpose of seeking a respite in direct communication with Barnard, and of so putting all her fancies to the test in a very simple and obvious manner. But twice she walked the length of the train, without being able to get another glimpse of her cousin, and then she found it was time to take her seat. However, they had to change trains at Blankton, and that would give her opportunity enough.

Yes, this time he was there; but in

alighting from the train he had passed immediately to the refreshment-room. There was an impulsiveness about his movements which did not reassure this observer. When again he came forth, she was standing directly in his pathway, but, without perceiving her, he passed on. His eyes were fixed resolutely to the ground, and she felt utterly unable to arouse him.

Barnard's features wore a singular expression, and Beatrice perceived in it a terrifying similarity to one habitual to the face of his father. This recognition aroused a wholly unsuspected terror, suggesting for the first time something definitely tragic. The darkest page in her own history was vividly recalled by it, and

her whole frame was instantly unnerved.

Nor was this construction of Barnard's appearance merely the result of a heated imagination. He had, in fact, since the revelation succeeding his marriage, gone through experiences very likely to have left some impression upon features by no means inexpressive. The shock which Helen's disclosure had given him, and for which her genuinely anxious intimations had not been able in the least to prepare him, had, by a sudden awakening of latent qualities constituent in his nature, apparently made an altogether different being of him. The qualities had been frequently evident in his progenitors, notably so in his father, but it was quite

within the reasonable probabilities that under other circumstances Barnard might have completed his full span of life without so much as a suspicion of his having inherited the undesirable part.

He had fled from the hotel in a frenzy of unrest. It could not be said that he reasoned about it, but, as by a flash of morbid intuition, the predicament in which he found himself became irreparably aggravated. Of course, had not he himself loved Helen with such uncommon intensity, the experiences had been different. It was the fever-heat of his passion which rendered the reaction so extreme. Had it been but the mere lust of cash which had been frustrated, how trifling would have been the consequences. But

it was his whole being that had received a foil; his very life's blood that had been juggled out of his veins. What in his pitiful simplicity he had deemed a reciprocal response to his passion, became but the grinning skeleton of a cheat. The woman had never known the semblance of attraction towards him; simply the low cunning of revenge, which, hell of all hells, had been able to assume to itself the grimly imposing guise of the tenderest of emotions! He found it maddening, thus to have the vital spark of his existence blown into a vivifying flame, only, as he thought, to receive the ashes back in blinding confusion into his soul. Could he have known that anything but the most supercilious of scorn at-

tended her triumph, he had doubtless been saved.

In the street he hailed a hansom, and muttering the word 'Victoria,' he plunged in. In a moment he was rattling over the stones. It was a long drive from this point, but upon reaching the station he found that he had still over an hour to wait before the departure of the three o'clock club train. This exasperated him, for mere movement seemed indispensable to his perturbed condition. He went to the refreshment-room and drank some brandy; then again to the cab-stand, and, summoning a driver, bade him drive with all speed to a bank he specified in the city. They reached it, Barnard disappeared within for a few moments, then

came out again with a cry of 'Victoria.'

As he sat nibbling his cigar in the train, a grim smile would occasionally play over his features, as it seemed, in mere exhilaration at the wild rush across the country. He held a paper up, but it was not difficult to see that it in no way engaged his attention. His eyes were intent upon such close indistinguishable objects through the window as registered the speed at which they travelled. The breath from the blue, almost motionless, channel, stretched out beneath a cloudless sky, brought him to momentary pause by its offer perhaps of a too wide suggestion. But that too he was able to ignore.

He strode to and fro to the throbbing and the thumping of the engines in the same feverish disquiet. He neither knew nor thought of where he was going, mere impetuous motion was all his need. If he stood for an instant with his eyes absently fixed upon any nautical appliance, the sudden discovery of his having excited another man's attention would drive him to his pacing with a hasty contraction of his features. And so the other pier was reached.

Then in the evening light he was again in the train, gazing as abruptly as before at the hurrying, varying landscape. The sun sunk a crimson ball to the hazy horizon, and as the grateful twilight crept over the meadows, Barnard at length fell into a

doze. He awoke soon, as it were gradually, to hear half-consciously the conversation of two fellow-passengers about a terrible railway murder, that day perpetrated, and he lay with his eyes closed to listen to them; being seized with a sudden fit of shuddering, he aroused himself and sat up in his corner.

'Jealousy, I suppose?'

'Well,' replied the other, with a smile, 'the man declared rather oddly that she had trifled with his feelings: an imaginative fellow, I suppose.'

'As women will,' commented Barnard.

But for the rest he remained only a listener. Then Paris was reached. After a momentary hesitation Goldhawke rebooked for Vienna, and went to bed in the train.

Before reaching the latter capital, however, he had matured his course, and he spent barely an hour by the Danube.

By travelling as impetuously as he had travelled hither, Barnard arrived on the King's Cross platform in time to take the north express by which his cousin Beatrice was a passenger. His nerves were wholly shattered, but one fixed idea had taken possession of his brain, and, as is customary in such cases, that was enough physically to sustain him. By no argument, of course, had he come to a decision and from no conscious knowledge was he speeding so confidently to the Pines. Helen had no intention of making a secret of her journey thither, but at the same time she had not disclosed it to him

or to anybody. Nevertheless, Barnard knew that his wife was at the Pines, and that he was going there to have an interview with her. His action had outstripped the restrants of any mere reasoning process.

A fresh breeze was blowing from the hills, and all the country was looking so placid, so unconcernedly beautiful when Beatrice reached her destination, that she found some difficulty in resisting a threatened hysterical collapse. From her corner she watched Barnard alight, and disappear through the gateway before she ventured to emerge from her seclusion. Then she hurried forth. Yet she knew that she must speak to him: all her soul

required it, and for this mainly was she journeying hither. But she had lost sight of him, and slackening her pace she succumbed to her emotions.

In the quietude and privacy of the country-roads, with only that fiery ball on the hill-tops to witness it, Beatrice allowed the tears to fall. It was but a dull, passionless outcome now of her indeterminate wretchedness, and its only result a lifeless regulation of her weary footsteps. Not until she almost unexpectedly found herself at the gateway of the Pines, and with some occasion for her eyesight, did she trouble even to wipe away her tears. Then, however, she did so with some alacrity, and looked about her with conscious alarm. She

had not formed even the most elementary scheme of action, and now that action imperatively confronted her, as usual she found how inadequate was her strength. In the mere obscuration of vision which succeeded, she sought the sheltering copse, if perchance she might find some inspiration amongst the brushwood.

Barnard had reached the house scarcely a quarter-of-an hour before her, and, entering, had gone directly to his room. The sun had some time before finally sunk below the hill-tops, and the cool breath of twilight was already imparting fresh fragrance to the hills. Intense quietude rested upon the place, and after the sounds which the newcomer's move-

ments had occasioned, there seemed nothing stirring throughout the house. Helen, it chanced, was seated alone in the drawing-room, watching, or at least with her eyes towards the last glow in the sky. She had heard his footstep on the gravel, and had seen him enter without a tremor. She had expected him, and he had come; and there now remained nothing but the meeting.

'If he could believe that I had loved him, how paltry it all would be.'

Such had been the constant burden of Helen's thought since they had parted at the hotel, and such it was at this critical moment of expectancy. Had some kind power revealed the crucial difficulty to him, and imparted the ability to discern

the resolution of it? Had she enough displayed how she loved him?

As she sat thus revolving it,—incredible as it may appear, calmly revolving it,—the sound of a door aroused her. A footstep crossed the hall pavement, and then, more by occult impression than by aid of actual sense, she knew that her own door, which had been already ajar, was thrust open. There was still sufficient light to distinguish figures throughout the room, and turning her face from the window as she rose, Helen recognized her husband walking towards her. Three yards away he paused, and there was unbroken silence. She had resolved, unwisely enough no doubt, to leave the initiative to him; therefore, as he only

stared at her, she looked outside. In another moment something impelled her to turn, and she then saw that one of his arms was extended horizontally towards her. But as she turned, the last light from the west illumined her impressive features, and he remained as helpless as a statue.

'Yes, I am prepared,' said Helen, still with unnatural calmness.

But instead of the report she had expected, there was but a heavy thud upon the floor; a stifled cry of 'Helen!' and in a moment she was alone. She picked the firearm from the carpet, and put it away in a drawer.

When Helen again moved she found that her temples were moist with perspir-

ation, and she laid her fragrant handkerchief against them. The two tears which inevitably dimmed her vision apparently she scorned to touch. They dropped and glistened for one instant in their fall.

It then occurred to Helen that if, during the one second allowed to her, she had wrapt him passionately to her breast, all the world had been gained; but the opportunity had gone, and the vision was ended.

## CHAPTER VII.

### EVENING MIST.

Into the twilight Barnard plunged, thrusting away from before his steps a tall and stately figure which seemed to physically impede him. Three or four times he made the movement, with such frenzied violence on the last occasion that the stroke of his arm whistled through the still air. When beyond the garden he paused abruptly, and raising

his eyes, as though to confront an actual opponent, for several seconds he stared into the obscurity.

Only some solitary trees stood there against the afterglow in the west, a few long dark clouds above, and a star or two. All was silent, except that a belated robin was singing his sparkling even-song in the garden, and some footsteps rustled in the brushwood hard by. Consciously Mr. Goldhawke heard neither. All his faculties were engaged in that one terrible stare.

By a mere movement of one hand across his face he aroused himself and hurried on. Beyond the first hedge was a large open meadow, with some trees sprinkled over it. At its foot lay a thin ground mist, still

just visible as it crept along the valley. Barnard left the footpath, and strode through the wet grass.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour had elapsed after his departure from the house when a gig drove up. A gentleman alighted, gave instructions to the man who had driven him, and then advanced leisurely to the front door. Mr. Goldhawke had but just gone out: Mrs. Goldhawke was within. The visitor would see the latter.

Helen and Philip had not encountered since their meeting at Grove House on the occasion of the philanthropic mission, and in reflecting upon the present interview the latter had felt some doubt as to the proper way of conducting himself. In his own easy mind, and full of his own mag-

nanimous intentions, he could not even yet think with gravity of the trick Helen had carried through so successfully. From his former glimpse of the young lady, and from all that he had since been able to learn about her, he could not form any very disparaging estimate of her as an individual. Moreover Barnard had been very sincerely infatuated about her, so doubtless as soon as the irritation induced by the first staggering discovery had worked itself off, the fellow would soon come to reason with the inevitable, and they would fall in love afresh, and live happily ever after. Philip's own generous intentions in respect to any advantages he might have acquired over the property of his father, seemed further conclusive confir-

mation of the optimistic creed. Despite this very tolerant attitude in Philip, he saw the force of a convention, and it seemed impossible for him to countenance directly a conspiracy so dangerous to the established commonwealth. He would receive this enterprising young lady with strictest civility. And here, in stateliest proportions, she advanced into the lamplight.

Helen was much paler than usual, but she was in full command of her normal dignity. As she entered the doorway, her visitor inwardly swore that she fully deserved her adventure,—yes, and every particle of the success which had so marvellously attended it. Pildacre's daughter! It was difficult to believe it.

Involuntarily he offered his hand, so influential was her presence, but she disregarded the movement gracefully.

'You wish to see your brother?'

'They tell me he is gone out. He won't be long?'

'I can't say.'

There was something peculiar in her tone, and Philip glanced at her quickly. 'You mean, then, that he will be?'

'He did not leave word.'

'I understand. I presume he has finally left you. I am then just five minutes too late.'

Helen regarded him inquiringly, and as they looked frankly at each other, Philip's careless generosity surged uppermost.

'What has happened, Helen?' asked he kindly.

'Nothing more than I expected. I presume, too, that he has left me: that is all.'

'That is not all. Has—has the villain struck you?'

'My husband is in no sense a villain, and he has not struck me.'

But Philip was uneasy. Whatever she had done, she was a lovely woman. Something in her appearance now suggested the pathetic.

'Sit down, H—Helen, please. I want a few words with you.'

The young lady did as she was bidden. Philip sat also, and leaned with his elbows on his knees.

'You don't suppose that I have any intention of retaining the property. *He* does not, surely?'

Helen's gaze was fixed passively upon him, and he could perceive that his words did not reach her. Her manner began to alarm him, for he had not thought her by any means an absent subject. Nevertheless he simply repeated his inquiry. Then Helen's look was expressive.

'He has many times told me that he had wholly decided to abandon all claim to the property. He had recently acquired views other than commercial. He knew that I was penniless.'

The one word of simple self-defence was effectual with Philip.

'He did? Then his behaviour is in-

explicable. But he was always a man of very singular moods. I have no doubt it will be perfectly right at last, when he has got over the astonishment. But I was going to say, what could I do with such quality of property? Two or three thousand a year will meet all my requirements. I must confess that I have regarded the whole affair as very much of a joke. You will let him know my proposition——'

'I can't suppose that I shall have an opportunity of doing so,' replied Helen. 'No doubt you will hear from him soon.'

'H'm, I forgot. I must hunt him up somehow. But,' proceeded Philip with a little nervous hesitation, 'you don't mean that, on your part, you will refuse a re-

conciliation? I am convinced that the estate——'

'That is not for present discussion.'

'Will you allow me—' began Philip again lightly.

'Forgive me, Mr. Goldhawke,' interposed Helen rising from her chair. 'I am far from well.'

'I can see it——'

'I am going to leave here this evening, and some preparation is necessary. I have no doubt that you will do everything that is generous, but henceforth it cannot concern me.' Helen was walking to the door.

'But do you not know what direction my brother has taken? To the station, I suppose.'

'I did not hear a carriage, that is all I can say.'

'Half an hour ago?'

'Barely.'

'Will you kindly ask the servants?'

Helen acquiesced, and withdrew to make inquiry. But she herself did not return. In a few minutes, it was the housekeeper who knocked, and Philip went himself to see.

Neither the robin's song, nor the rustle in the brushwood, did Barnard hear; but as he passed into the wide meadow, the robin flew away and the cause of the other sound became apparent. The figure of a woman issued from the copse, and with active pace followed in Mr. Goldhawke's

steps. By the hedge again she stood, wondering that he had left the path. But she was anxious to have a word with him, so she set foot to follow.

Now as Beatrice trod after her cousin in the dew-wet grass, her characteristic timidity prevented her drawing immediately near him, just as it had but now made her pause before seeking him at the house. His re-appearance so soon after his going in surprised her, and inspired misgiving. He walked at a great rate, and she began to think that the distance between them was on the increase.

Then she ran, and for a time at least obviously lessened it. Once she called, loudly as she thought, 'Barnard!'

But if it was above her breath, he had not heard it. He was hastening on.

He had now entered the ground mist which was slowly rising there, and Beatrice heard the murmur of the river. The land on this side was strange to her, so the sound came as a surprise. She went on more quickly.

When within a few yards of where he was standing, she saw that he had paused by the side of a tree, and instantly a sickening terror laid hold upon her. She was unable to move forward, unable to take to flight. Her eyes were fixed upon the evening sky reflected in the darkly-flowing water, and an intense commiseration filled her heart. She must tell him how she loathed the bit-

ter wrong to which he had been subjected. That last look of his and his words haunted her. She was obviously implicated in the iniquity, in his mind,—and after his lavish generosity to her! It was intolerable. The hoarse chuckle of some water-bird aroused her, and she took some more paces forward.

'Barnard!' she said again.

He only started, without turning round. She stepped again, and was now beside the tree against which he stood. Apparently he neither saw nor heard her.

'Barnard, I have had no part in it. Do believe me. I hate the cruelty——'

He took a step forward to the river-bank, and Beatrice leaped to seize him.

Turning round at the touch, he grasped her by the throat.

'Why do you follow me? You hate me in——'

His eyes glared close to her features, and she felt his breath upon her. Then of a sudden his fingers relaxed, and she fell backwards.

'You, Beatrice!' he gasped. 'I thought——'

He said no more.

As Beatrice rose she heard a plunge into the river, and her cry startled the birds in the bushes. But nobody else was near, and sudden resolution seemed to come to her. Without a moment's hesitation she scrambled down the bank, it was not more than a couple of feet

above the surface of the water, and she stepped outwards into the stream. It scarcely reached her breast, and when the figure appeared she clasped it tightly in her arms. She spoke hurried, impetuous words of such terror as occurred to her simple, earnest soul, but whether Barnard heard or not it was impossible to determine. He offered no resistance to her efforts, so that, with his head upon her shoulder, she found her strength sufficient to bear him a few yards lower down the stream, where she discerned some branches which would assist her in her task. She could raise the man's figure enough to rest it on a bough, and then she clambered hurriedly out on to the bank. She drew Barnard some

distance into the grass, and, with a continuance of the astonishing presence of mind which had come to her, she tied his feet together with his own handkerchief. Without daring to investigate further, she ran with what speed was possible to get assistance from the house.

Her news was speedily confided to Philip when he responded to the housekeeper's summons, and enjoining composure upon the terrified domestics, he, with Beatrice, withdrew to go with the only other man about the premises to the river-side.

Helen was upstairs packing her trunks, whilst this commotion was proceeding, and, as soon as the men had departed,

the housekeeper came up to her and knocked timidly at the door of her chamber.

'What is it?' cried Helen, perhaps impatiently.

The applicant was permitted to enter, and she explained; then leaving Helen, who was standing motionless in the candle-light. She abandoned her packing, nor did she leave, as she had intended, that evening.

Whilst the doctor and Philip were engaged with the patient, Helen drew Beatrice away to a private chamber, dragging her literally by the hand, for the latter was unwilling (physically unable) to hold any intercourse with Helen.

'Look at me, Bee,' cried Helen, excitedly, when they were alone. 'Look at me as you have never before looked at me. Do I appear the coarse and vulgar creature that you think me? Do I—tell me, girl?'

This alarmed Beatrice, and she faltered a scarce-audible negative.

'I love him, Bee; I love him more madly than I can tell you,' pursued the other, all her person quivering with suppressed emotion; 'but neither he, you, nor anybody will believe it. You *must* believe it; you must make him believe it, or—or I shall kill myself. Do not be afraid, I am not hysterical. I am quite serious in what I say to you. Will you do this for me, Bee? If he can only

know that I love him, he will be saved. Will you?'

The obvious earnestness of Helen impressed Beatrice instantly, and she stood back in a mute stare. There was no acting in this, clearly. The soft soul of Beatrice was enthralled forthwith.

'Really, Helen!' she cried, with a glad sparkle through her blinded eyes, and seizing her friend's hand ecstatically. 'You love him,—you have always loved him?'

'No, not always. I began as you suppose; but, Bee, I have learned something on the way. Do you think that I have suffered nothing? Do you suppose that you could invent a more exquisite torture for me than the flame of my own

passion has been? Can you not see how *this* has haunted me through all the months since I first had a glimpse of it?'

'Oh, if you had told him before!'

'Don't madden me!' cried Helen, furiously. 'I should have lost him. He would never have believed it. I had no course but this. An hour ago I thought as you do, but now I know that I had no course but this. Do you believe me, Bee? Will you do what I ask you?'

Beatrice had scarcely uttered an emphatic acquiescence before there was a hurried knocking at the door.

'Beatrice!' It was Philip's voice. 'Beatrice!'

Beatrice ran out to him, and Helen was left again alone to her meditations.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BARNARD WAKES.

For some days Mr. Barnard Goldhawke was pronounced to be dangerously ill, and various were the rumours which flitted uneasily over the country-side. Amongst the better informed, conjecture could of course take but one direction—namely, that Mr. Goldhawke had, a few days too late, made the inconvenient discovery which, to their more cultivated

instincts, had occurred at the proper time. In this construction Lady Ivelet was unfortunately implicated in a scarcely desirable manner. Goldhawke had been looked upon as by no means a bad sort of fellow, and whatever his extraction, when consorting with a district of this unimpeachable quality, he was entitled to immunity from this kind of very vulgar risk. Everybody of more or less respectability felt involved in the scandal,—for that scandal it was to be, Mrs. Sinclair Palimpsest had made it her especial care to free from any sort of doubt.

Determinate information as to the actual catastrophe was sadly wanting, (despite the sympathetic visit paid to the Pines by the lady before mentioned, apparently in

vindication merely of the character of her class,) for of Barnard's brief interview with Helen nobody knew even the vaguest outlines, except the two who were engaged in it: and in the face of a history so creditable, Mr. Goldhawke's accident at the river was easily accounted for. In this respect Mr. Charles Saltway rendered considerable service.

He had presented himself at the Pines a couple of days after the incidents we know of, and had been closeted with Philip for some time. They had formulated their tactics between them.

'It is a scandalous affair undoubtedly,' Charles had said with proper indignation: 'but, you know, Goldhawke, he had the most definite warning. I myself did my

best to enlighten him, and he repeatedly declared to me that it mattered not who the girl was. "Dukes have married beggars," he said; so, of course, what more was to be done? I thought he was going with his eyes open.'

'Yes, you are a good fellow, Charles. I doubt if I should have done so much myself. No other parentage in the universe would have affected him, I am convinced. He has had this fellow on the brain for a long time. But it will be all right yet, I believe. The doctor thinks him slightly better, although not out of danger. His ailment is a mystery. Something of the brain, I fear. You may, however, safely disseminate pleurisy.'

'Certainly. Now, do you know any-

thing of this man Secroft of Wallborough?'

'Nothing at all. He struck me as another disappointed candidate. Has he turned up again?'

'I think he had better know of the marriage.'

'He is already aware of it. I witnessed the effect of it myself.' And Philip shrugged his shoulders expressively.

At this Saltway expressed satisfaction, and their talk turned to more general affairs.

Philip walked by the side of his visitor's horse down to the gate, for the most part silent. They were on the turf until they reached the dense shrub border, so that their footsteps were inaudible; but as the

horse's hoofs first struck the gravel road, a figure darted into the shelter of the bushes, startled by the unexpected sound. Philip looked up and nodded to his companion.

'What is her attitude exactly now?' asked Charles, when they had gone a little further.

'Difficult of construction to a dull intellect,' was the reply. 'I can tell you better in a few days.'

'H'm,' mused Saltway, and kept silence.

'The doctor has forbidden her to nurse him,' added Philip

'Ha, really! . . . Good-bye.'

Helen heard the trotting footsteps of the horse as she stood screened by the shrubs, and she nipped off the thick glossy

green leaf which she had been smoothing between her fingers, and picked it to pieces. Philip respected her seclusion and passed on to the house again.

It is possible that Helen felt these days o enforced inactivity as severe a species of penance as could possibly have been devised for her. Hitherto activity had been the breath of life to her; reflection, a symptom of morbidity most strenuously to be resisted. That her temperament in this respect was materially altered by her recent circumstances, could not with any regard to truth be asserted; but that the natural reflective faculty had found more definite assertion in her than at any time previously was obvious enough. It was true that she had been strictly forbidden

to enter the chamber which the patient occupied, and this entailed upon her an inordinate portion of leisure. It is true she passed much of it in reading, but there were times when her brain refused to concentrate itself upon the pages. Then she would leap up, and after pacing restlessly to and fro in her chamber, she would pass into the open air, and seek for distraction in the minor details of nature. Temporary departure did at one time suggest itself, but it was speedily rejected.

In outward appearance, beyond a settled paleness of features, there was little change in Helen. She spoke as firmly to a domestic, dressed with as much artistic exactness, as she had at any time

done. But she shunned intercourse with Philip. This, of course, he could not but feel to be natural, and he delicately respected her endeavour.

Beatrice and the nurse that had been engaged to help her were in undisturbed charge of the sick room. It was only after every departure of the doctor that Beatrice came and tapped at the door of Helen's chamber, to be immediately admitted. She was always received with the same glance of eager inquiry, but hitherto her report had been invariably disappointing. As day after day went by, Helen could not disguise her impatience, and Beatrice left her with a sense of increasing uneasiness.

Barnard had not as yet displayed any

conscious recognition of his surroundings, but in the vehemence of delirium, the name of Helen had been frequently upon his lips. Upon these and any other favourable occasions, it was the practice of Beatrice to urge in passionate, mollifying appeal upon his consciousness, the tender claims of Helen; but, as she saw, without any glimmer of response. One night, it was the fifth of his illness, she had just returned from her interview with Helen, and had taken her place by the bed, the patient being for the moment unusually calm, when he turned his face over towards her, and in the dim light which illumined the room Beatrice could see his eyes fixed with unexpected steadiness upon her face. She turned slightly

aside, but she became aware that his eyes had settled into a gaze. Upon that, without moving her features, she quietly asked him if he felt better; but received no response. He seemed to commune with himself.

Whilst Beatrice was wondering what this might portend, then what course she herself might in safety pursue, she became aware of another movement in the room. It startled her from her reverie and she looked round. Scarcely a yard from her elbow stood a tall apparition, with a hand raised in the act of enjoining silence upon her. She at once saw it to be Helen.

In a state of anxious alarm, Beatrice turned her eyes to the bed, and saw the

gaze of Barnard to be still fixed upon herself. She had scarcely become conscious of this when she felt a slight rustle beside her,—the moving figure made no other sound,—and she saw Helen lean over the patient, and impress a silent kiss upon his face. He continued motionless and silent throughout it, and when the mysterious visitor had as silently departed, Beatrice saw that he was fast asleep.

For about two hours Barnard slept, silently and calmly.

The effect appeared little less than miraculous to the susceptible Beatrice, for she never doubted of the cause and effect; and in the subsequent musing and emotion to which she gave way, it was difficult for her to resist the impression of

the supernatural character of the visit. That Helen would so contravene instructions at the risk of her husband's life was not credible; for it had been enjoined upon everybody concerned that there was to be no thought of their meeting until Barnard should display unclouded rationality, and should therein of his own motion ask to see Helen. The depth of this reverie inevitably induced a doze, and it was only the sound of Barnard's voice which aroused her from it.

'Why will not Philip come to see me?' he asked, as though in rational impatience. 'I have wanted him for weeks, and you all do your best to thwart me. I insist upon seeing him.'

Beatrice had been instantly beside him,

but of course did not suggest to him that this was the first time in the course of his illness that he had mentioned his brother's name.

'Certainly he shall come to see you,' she said, quietly. 'But will it not be better in the morning. He is asleep now.'

The patient eyed her curiously as she spoke to him.

'You, Beatrice! Why, how on earth have you got here? I have hunted for you for years . . . It was a damnable trick, but I will make up for it,' he added in a low confidential tone. 'I never knew that it would work like that.'

In gazing fixedly at her, he again fell asleep.

It was earliest dawn, just as the sparrows were beginning to chirp and twitter in the eaves, that Barnard next awoke.

Beatrice had given place to the other nurse, and for an instant he seemed taken aback by the strange presence; but he quietly collected himself.

'Is my brother Philip in the house?' he asked, and received the affirmative assurance.

The nurse pulled a rope communicating with a bell in Beatrice's room, and the latter quickly appeared. Barnard recognized her at once and repeated his request for his brother. So Philip was ultimately aroused.

He entered the room in a dressing-gown,

and proceeding composedly to the bedside took up Barnard's hand.

'Come, this is better,' he said, quite cheerily.

'Yes, I shall soon be all right. It is only that cursed train.'

Philip assented without, of course, understanding the allusion. He signalled the two women to withdraw.

'Sit down,' said Barnard, pointing to a chair. 'Do you know, Philip, I believe our father was partly mad.'

'I have little doubt of it,' returned the other lightly. 'Most people are.'

'I suppose so;' and Barnard unmistakably smiled at the pleasantry. 'I have long wanted to talk to you about the property.'

'Don't worry yourself about that, my dear fellow.'

'I have long wanted to tell you that I abandon all claim to any of it. It has been the curse of my life. I couldn't combine the two like a reasonable mortal. I am going to live in another way. I'm married, you know.'

Philip expressed his pleasure at the announcement.

'But you'll want something to live on all the same, you know,' he added. 'I thought we might make a joint affair——'

'No,' interposed the other impatiently. 'I have done with it. I won't have a farthing. I have as much as we shall want.'

'As you please, of course.'

'This is exactly what I want to tell you: what I have wanted to tell you for months, to have it off my mind. It seems to me that you have to do one thing or the other in this world,—at least I have. I cannot combine the two.'

There was a simple distressful earnestness in the man's utterance, which, under other circumstances, might have suggested the ludicrous.

'Then what do you say to our founding the Technical Institution proposed in the testator's will?'

'Anything you like. It is yours,—not mine. I cannot give my mind to it. The thought of the place sickens me. Never shall I go there again, never. I am going to live abroad.'

Philip saw that he must refrain from any persuasion, so he muttered an unqualified approval.

'Mind, I mean it,' repeated Barnard. 'You may think it strange, for it is a large property; but I am quite serious. The thought has nothing to do with my illness, you know. See Strangeways about it, if you have any difficulties. He knows as much about the business as I do. Don't mention the place again to me, that's all.'

There was an impetuousness about this last utterance which Philip noticed.

'You will promise me that?'

'By all means, if you wish it.'

'Will you go to-day?'

'Certainly.'

'Yes, to-day. I can't get well until that infernal incubus is off my mind.'

Barnard's eyes then closed, and by his breathing his brother thought him again asleep; but as Philip arose to withdraw, the sick man's eyes were opened, and by a feeble gesture he recalled the other.

'We have not understood each other properly somehow,' he said, looking up to Philip; 'but I believe we may do so in future. I feel clearer in my mind about many things.'

Philip gave utterance to some kindly commonplace.

'Make some provision for Beatrice out

of that—that incubus. I gave her something, but hardly enough.'

'Philip!' called out the patient, yet once again. 'Here; what do you think of my wife?'

'A most admirable woman.'

'You know who she is?'

'Oh, yes; but what is that in the face of her passionate attachment to you?'

'Yes,' replied Barnard with a placid smile. 'I believe she is. I had a singular dream, which I will tell you another time. You will go to-day?'

'Without fail.'

'Yes, do.'

Philip stood, and saw in a few minutes that his brother was asleep indeed. Then he withdrew.

## CHAPTER IX.

### REPAIR.

Philip left the Pines in a state of considerable elation. So far from having involved them all in circumstances of a vulgarly tragic order, it seemed that Helen's extraordinary tactics were about to culminate in a desirable reconstruction of their family conditions, such as it would have been difficult to effect so completely in any other way. That his

brother could have been susceptible of such consummate 'taming' (as he termed it) at the hands of any woman, was a matter of unspeakable astonishment; but even he himself now had to admit the exceptional quality and force of Helen's influence.

In narrating the circumstances to his wife that day at Grove House he permitted himself the use of such enthusiastic epithets that Gertrude found herself called upon to remonstrate, of course in her own peculiar manner.

'She must indeed be a paragon of excellence, you see; after all, your first impression was the right one, dear.'

'Evidently. Well, Dude, in due course

you shall have an opportunity of judging for yourself——'

'I——'

'Why, you don't object to giving her a friendly hand, surely.'

'Really, Philip, what an extraordinary suggestion! But you are such a tease,' she added, archly.

'Yes, so you say; but teasing is far from my thoughts at the present moment. I was referring to what was to be our improved family relationships in future, and Barnard and his wife—— Do you seriously mean to say, Gertrude, that you will not be friendly with her?'

'How, indeed, can you ask me?' returned Gertrude, with comprehensive dignity.

'Understand me, dear girl, that I shall be displeased if at any time and under any circumstances you should show the smallest incivility, nay, the smallest want of cordiality towards her. No matter what—'

'Then unquestionably the best plan will be for us not to meet,' replied the wife, with unmistakable decision.

Philip shrugged his shoulders, and felt for his cigar-case.

'And I presume the same applies to your sister Beatrice?'

'You have no right to say such a thing, Philip,' retorted she, indignantly. 'Have I ever shown anything but sisterly affection for poor Beatrice? I have always been anxious to do something for her, if it had been possible. If she is really now

trying to reform and to live a respectable life, I shall be the first to extend a hand to her. But I shall always think the part she has taken in this dreadful affair a stain upon her character, and one not easily removed.'

Philip smiled.

'She is more than respectable, she is exemplary. I shouldn't wonder if she doesn't at last bestow her hand and fortune upon our good friend Nahum Pildacre, Esq., late from the moon, and now of——'

But seeing the effect of such pleasantry upon his more delicately minded companion, Philip refrained from pursuing it to the intended conclusion. He left the room whistling a ditty.

During the next day Mr. Philip Goldhawke was unusually active in the commercial quarters of the town of Aggthorpe. It had commenced in an exhaustive consultation which he had held with Mr. William Elliott Strangeways, the legal gentleman entrusted with certain authority under the terms of the elder Goldhawke's will, and the outcome of this interview had soon been noised abroad. Aggthorpe was to have what was known as a Technical Institute of gigantic dimensions, wherein every manner of aspirant could sharpen his native weapons of craft, and so have the better chance of throttling his less cunning neighbour in the strife to which all were so gloriously devoted. The town of Slumberton, it was confidently asserted,

would be positively nowhere, and the hearts of Aggthorpeans were blithe. The name of Goldhawke was as that of a god, and the sons of him were as the sons of the morning.

Into commercial details we need hardly enter. It is enough to say that under the circumstances the legal gentleman suggested the translation of the prodigious Goldhawke undertaking into a company of limited liability, with say himself as managing director at a minimum salary of three thousand a-year. Philip approved everything, only taking care to reserve for himself and his a sufficiently substantial provision. The amount to be devoted to the public colossal structure was put down at one hundred and fifty thousand pounds

—a sum pronounced adequate and princely by everybody who had been consulted.

Elate with this public spirited handling of enormous figures, Philip took a cab to Warren Common with the purpose of giving a pleasant surprise to his wife in the shape of a substantial endowment for her prosperous little institute at Eastley; but he was prevented from doing this with the precipitancy that he intended. As the cab drew near to the gates of Grove House, and the pace of the horse was consequently slackened, Philip was looking idly out. His eyes instantly fell upon a recognizable figure; a figure which, as soon as it perceived it was recognized, fell to an ultra-subservience of *congé*.

'Do you want me, Mr. Pildacre?' cried Philip from within.

Upon the journalist responding, the driver drew rein, and Mr. Goldhawke alighted.

'I must beg you to pardon the presumption of——' Pildacre began, somewhat too effusively, but was interrupted.

'No apology, man,' said Philip, in the superabundance of his good humour. 'Come in with me if you want to talk.'

'Only two words, sir. You will understand the feelings with which I am encumbered. I could not refrain from a personal journey to help me to bear them. You—you have—good news?'

'Come in, sir; come in. The very best

of news. All is proceeding admirably. But you are the very man I have been wanting, without in the least knowing it. You wrote an article or two last year in your paper——'

'You, Mr. Goldhawke, will, I think, understand me. Principle alone has ever swayed me. Of my own father——'

'No apologies, again I say. So far are they from being called for, that I think the debt is all the other way. It looks very much to me as if your action merited some peculiar measure of reward. Yes—yes. My brother is getting well, and is more than reconciled to his situation. He has actually forsworn commerce, and Aggthorpe is to be the gainer.'

Philip briefly recounted the philan-

thropic intentions, whereat the journalist raised his hand to his temple.

'Dear sir, you stagger me.'

'Now it seems to me, Mr. Pildacre, that you can very materially help us. You have thought over such schemes——'

'It might once have been,' exclaimed the journalist, in considerable agitation. 'But—but I fear I cannot possibly now command the leisure.'

'May I ask to what end your present application is tending?'

'To the dissemination of literature,' was the proud reply. 'I can give my hand to no other labour.'

'Not even to the extension of the social welfare of——'

'Time was, sir; time was; but it has

escaped me,—irrecoverably escaped me.'

'Pardon me, Mr. Pildacre, it has not. You must give us a hand in this undertaking. What are you doing?'

'Since the occasion you know of, sir, I have been a compositor in a respectable establishment, earning thirty-six shillings a week. You see I am well employed and independent.'

'Certainly, but such talents as yours must be more directly used for the public. Now I offer you immediately a kind of secretaryship to this scheme of ours, with an opening salary of two hundred a-year. Would you not in this way find more congenial scope for your energies?'

Pildacre stared for an instant apparently bewildered.

'You see, what I should want would be this. You would have to inspect personally similar institutions throughout the country, (travelling expenses, of course, allowed,) and obtain plans and reports of as many as you could, so that the committee might consider them at leisure. You would have to collect for us the complete literature of the subject, and act as secretary at our meetings, and—and—do all other things for promoting our object that occurred to you. You might really make yourself quite an authority on the subject.'

Philip saw that the eyes of the agitated journalist glistened as this horizon was opened out to him, but no words were uttered.

'You will scarcely decline the work?'

'Mr. Goldhawke, you have restored my youth to me,' was all the man could say.

Poor Pildacre was wholly overcome by this unexpected conclusion to his northward journey, which had been undertaken in such a grievous spirit of harrassing unrest. The shattering of his faith in his daughter Helen,—a consummation which her inexplicable conduct had rendered inevitable,—seemed to have finally deprived him of the enthusiasm of life, and immediately upon the departure of Beatrice from London, he had sought and obtained humble employment in the printing trade, his conscience no longer permitting him to live in comfort upon an

allowance supplied by his daughter, and obtained apparently by such questionable methods. He had no sooner commenced his labours than an intolerable craving for information assailed him. He knew not with certainty whither to address a letter, either to his daughter or to Beatrice; and he harrassed himself into the conclusion that their silence was ominous. Thus it was that he had been impelled to make this journey to the house of Philip Goldhawke, and with this amazing result.

When he had partially recovered from the bewilderment into which Philip's proposition had thrown him, Pildacre showed no backwardness in closing with it. In reality he instinctively felt it to

be the one career for which beneficent providence had in the first place equipped him, had not certain human incongruities overtaken him on his journey. But happily he was not a man to bemoan mere evils in the past. Nahum Pildacre's life was ever ready to commence afresh from any visit of exhilarating circumstance. If he was in the gloom of despair to-day, he would be most likely in the heaven of ecstatic confidence to-morrow. So it was on the present occasion. After they had talked together a little longer, he took the opportunity of assuring Mr. Goldhawke that until this moment his life had not practically had any existence; henceforth . . .'

At length the visitor rose to go, but

Philip Goldhawke once more checked him.

'Oh, dear no,' exclaimed the latter. 'I have not yet told you half that I have to tell. You can talk more in detail at dinner.'

The journalist could only look up in deepening amazement.

'You have no other engagement? . . . No, then excuse me a moment.'

When alone, Pildacre stood upright and clutched his head between his two tremulous hands, and gaped.

Philip went over to where he knew he should find his wife.

'Pildacre is going to stay to dinner,' he said, decisively, as though aware that decision would be needful.

'Really! He came back again, did he?'

'Oh, you dismissed him, did you?' and Philip smiled, not quite so pleasantly as he was wont.

For an instant neither spoke.

'Are you coming in?'

'No, thank you.'

Philip bit his lips and returned to the more genial journalist, who had found time to repress his exuberant vitality.

To pursue their conversation, the host took his visitor into the library, and there they established themselves in comfortable chairs. They were scarcely seated before Philip broached a new and in some respects, a startling topic.

'I want you to tell me all you knew of my cousin Beatrice,' he said.

'I, Mr. Goldhawke? Really I have had so little of her acquaintance that——'

'All you know, I say,' interposed Philip, with a smile. 'I don't ask for anything supernatural.'

'No, no, ha! ha! Well, really,—really——'

'What has been your impression of her from such experience as you have had?'

'A woman instinct with sympathy,' began Nahum, in oracular tones, 'to whom the woes of the world are incentives to self-sacrificing endeavour. My experience only dates' . . . Mr. Pildacre narrated the manner of his introduction to Beatrice and the circumstances of her life

since then, to all of which Philip listened with peculiar interest.

'Do you happen to know whether she called at this house on the occasion of her arrival with your daughter?'

'Well, really, I hardly remember. I don't think . . .'

'Don't trifle with me, Mr. Pildacre,' said the other, sternly. 'You know she did call in the evening. Isn't it so?'

'It is, sir.'

'And did her sister refuse to give her any assistance?'

'By no means. Beatrice always spoke favourably of the interview.'

'But somehow it was never repeated.'

'That might be easily accounted for.

Your cousin, sir, was extraordinarily sensitive on the score of her past misfortunes, and anything which served to revive the association in her was insupportable.'

'Exactly,' said Philip, absently. 'I intend to do as my brother has done, and make her a present of another ten thousand pounds.'

Pildacre received this announcement in silence, as seemed most fitting. In very truth he knew nothing of the original ten thousand, for Beatrice had never found the courage to tell him, perceiving instinctively the restraint it might possibly impose upon the conscientious journalist.

'And, Mr. Pildacre, there is some diffi-

culty in rendering effectual kindness to Beatrice. I fear that she will never be induced to avail herself of my house. Of my brother's, more possibly, for they talk of living wholly abroad: but, apart from that, may I ask that you will make an effort to keep up your intercourse with her. She has evidently a respect for you . . . Yes, a very warm respect for you, and I have no doubt your influence will be valuable to her. You don't mind a little charge of this kind?'

'It will be the greatest honour and pleasure of my life, sir,' cried the journalist, with enthusiasm. 'The charge shall be a sacred one.'

Very soon they went in to dinner.

Over the table the conversation was

light and varied, until the topic of Mr. Pildacre's future duties was raised, and then Philip, under the genial influence of the fourth glass of wine, fully expressed his sentiments upon it.

As they sat over dessert in the plenitude of good-humour with themselves, each other, and the world at large, each lit a cigar. Without, it was a glorious evening, the sun having just dipped beneath the sombre haze which characterizes an industrial horizon, the crimson upper rim of the orb being still for a moment perceptible in the ridge. The sky above, despite industrial conditions, was aflame with rich and deepening colour, towards which Philip had cast his benevolent glance. At a thought he

then signalled to his companion to refill his glass, and having done the same himself, he rose with his eyes twinkling for the toast.

'We drank it before together, Pildacre, but circumstances were then not exactly favourable. I can now, with confident satisfaction, call upon you to drink in unclouded serenity to the long life and increasing happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Barnard Goldhawke.'

With his eyes aglow, reflecting the evening light outside and the unprecedented radiance within, Pildacre stood and joined in the toast. The glasses were lowered, and the journalist had just given his preliminary cough, when a knock at the door checked him. Philip

called out in impatience, and the maid brought a communication in to him.

'A telegram, sir,' she said.

He took it, tore off the coloured envelope, and read. His hand trembled, and he read it again. Then he handed it across to Pildacre, who read these words:

'*Died at half-past seven to-night. Will you come?*'

The more emotional journalist burst into tears.

## CHAPTER X.

### ONE DAY.

The greater part of the day succeeding that interview between the brothers in the early dawn was passed by Barnard in a more or less somnolent condition. He showed no relapse into audible delirium, but sometimes when Beatrice addressed him abruptly, it seemed to take him a few seconds thoroughly to collect

his reason, such as is often the case with a normal intellect upon being suddenly aroused from sleep. For the rest he seemed perfectly conscious of his own predicament, and of all that was proceeding about him. Two or three times in the course of the morning he asked whether Philip had gone on his errand, and evinced considerable satisfaction at the repeated assurances he received. But he did not ask for Helen, nor did he make another single reference to her.

It was a beautiful summer day, and, with the window thrown open, the invalid seemed to reap infinite content from the placid contemplation of the outside natural objects from his bed. There was a thrush, and a wood-pigeon in the pine-

trees hard by, whose voices he never tired of following. The swallows twittered as they were fluttering about the roof in ceaseless occupation; and occasionally the notes of the cuckoo, or the thrilling wail of the curlew, came from somewhere far away. Not the most insignificant of the sounds did Barnard miss.

The doctor expressed a more favourable opinion, and Beatrice hastened with it to the room of the anxious Helen, who was standing in breathless expectancy beside her own door. Even the tap was not necessary, for as Beatrice reached the mat the door opened from within. Helen read her friend's altered expression, and drew her in with tremulous excitement.

'Better? He is still conscious, isn't he?'

'Much better,' replied the other as hurriedly.

Helen's eyes lightened.

'What has he said of me? Tell me every syllable, Bee.'

Beatrice hesitated. It seemed hard to say that she had never once occurred to his thoughts.

'Good or bad, I don't care which,' pursued Helen; 'but I must know. Don't torture me, Bee. Anything; only speak. He has used my name?'

'Not yet, Helen.'

'Not all the day? Not one utterance of my name, or—or—of wife? Not?'

At the repeated negative, Helen turned away with an impatient fling, and walked to and fro over the carpet. Beatrice watched her with silent anxiety for some seconds, then advanced to intercept her.

'It is only the first day, Helen . . .'

'You have not helped me,' cried Helen, vehemently, avoiding the hand stretched out towards her. 'You have not done what I asked you. You are all trying to make me kill him. I know what it is. But he shall live in spite of all of you! He shall live for me.'

Beatrice drew back speechless before such inconsiderate emotion. That it was unjust mattered little to her; the alarming discomposure which it betokened in

such a temperament as Helen's was her main concern.

In a minute or two Helen advanced to her more calmly, and actually took her hand.

'I don't mean all that, Bee; you know that I don't mean it. But you cannot think what it is for me to endure day after day of this helpless inactivity. I can't read; I can't walk; I can't do anything. If I look at a page I see those distorted features glaring at me from every word, and taunting me with unimagined horrors. If I roam the hill, every bush cries out against me; every bird pecks its execrations at me; and every breeze comes as an unendurable sigh from him. I don't know what the

world is, Bee; I can't imagine what it is. It was all so simple before; but now, I can't—I can-not imagine what it is!'

Working herself up to a state of intolerable agitation, Helen again flung off, and paced her chamber impetuously. Beatrice simply regarded her in a state of nervous bewilderment, not daring again to interrupt her mood. Suddenly Helen stopped.

'You loved him once; you told me so in the heather that day: did it bless or curse the world for you? . . . Tell me, Bee, what was it to you?'

'A blessing,' faltered Beatrice, from the safety of traditional conviction.

'To you? You found it so?'

'Ye-es, I think so.'

Helen smiled grimly at the modified admission, and withdrew to the window. A sound warned her of Beatrice's departure, and she hurried to the door.

'Not yet, Bee.'

The door was again closed, and Beatrice held in place.

'I shall watch with him to-night,—alone. I shall come at ten o'clock, and you must be there.'

'My darling Helen——'

'Hush! I know what I am talking about, and I mean it. I shall sit with him throughout the night. I shall appear at ten, and you will silently withdraw. Tell the nurse that she will not be wanted.'

'Helen, I dare not,' asserted the other, more boldly. 'He has not asked for you, and the doctor said it might cause his death.'

'The doctor!' cried Helen, in scorn. 'Does the doctor know every secret of the universe? Does he know anything at all beyond his pills? This case is now beyond him. I shall come, Bee, and you will withdraw.'

Beatrice tried one more appeal, but Helen had returned to the window and was immovable; so, in a state of agitation, the other left her.

How long those remaining evening hours were to both of them! Beatrice went about her occupations like a guilty creature, for she felt that, with decision,

this rash project of Helen's could yet have been averted; and the decision was wanting. The meeting would come about inevitably, and the consequences would be hers. She hugged the disquieting conviction.

After the last hues of sunset had died away, Barnard became talkative. He commented upon his natural observations of the day, and was anxious to compare those of Beatrice with them. In her state of uneasiness she found it impossible to take part in any sustained conversation; all her attention being centred rather in a prayer for the particular direction of her patient's thoughts. If he would but speak to her of Helen! Not in the most distant manner dared she lead him to the

topic; and voluntarily it seemed as far from his thoughts as ever. Yet Philip told her that he had spoken of his wife to him, and favourably. It seemed a particular malignity of fate against herself.

Barnard had not asked for his wife, nor had he in any way made reference to her, and now, as the twilight deepened, and Beatrice could but just distinguish the bats which flitted around the tree-tops in the garden, his voice was getting more and more intermittent, and his remarks more and more obscure. There was no help from fate then, and Beatrice was conscious that she had done nothing at all herself. Nay,—at last,—had they not better meet? From that kiss, actual

or supernatural, had not all his improvement dated? In *such* matters, mused the sentimental apologist, undoubtedly the doctors did not know all. Yes, they should meet.

For fully an hour Beatrice had sat in dim lamplight, silent and motionless. Barnard's breathing was regular, and she knew that he slept. This fact gave her encouragement, for it was always possible that every re-awakening might bring the longed-for word to his lips. She required one more look to convince herself of this security, and with noiseless step she walked to his side. Leaning down in tremulous uncertainty, she scanned his features closely. His eyes were fast closed, and his breathing unmistakable.

She just laid one hand upon his hair, when she heard a distant clock on a landing strike ten, and straightening herself, she perceived the motionless figure of Helen beside her. Beatrice took her hand, and at a little distance gave her, in a whisper, such instructions as she thought needful. With this, and one last look, as though of warning, she withdrew.

It was only a dim night-lamp that illumined the chamber, but, as it just permitted a glimpse of the sleeping features, Helen made it suffice. She took a chair close by the bedside, her face scarce a couple of feet from his, and there through the silent hours that followed she watched.

Helen was the only waking figure in

the house that night, for despite the disquietude of Beatrice and her resolve, weariness triumphed over her, and where she had thrown herself down in her garments she slept, and soundly. Helen's eyes never closed. Every movement of the sleeper she witnessed, and once or twice she sat in rigid readiness for him to awake, but each time his limbs became recomposed, and with a heavy, long-drawn sigh he renewed his slumber. Once or twice also he muttered, but though she thrust her ear as closely to his lips as she dare, Helen could gather no coherence.

It was a momentous watch for Helen, and in the silence and the solitude, many things pressed themselves eagerly upon

her for review. For one thing, she was a girl no longer; and whatever her construction of its meaning, of the intensity of life, at least, she would not again be in doubt. The subtle bond between herself, and this unconscious sleeping figure here beside her, had revealed a depth, if it had afforded no determinate dimensions. The theatrical phase was passed; what was to take its place would no doubt greatly depend upon circumstances to come. That night completed her apprenticeship to pure humanity; much future experience might be engrafted upon it.

Between two and three o'clock Helen moved to the eastern window to notice the first grey glimmer of dawn. Beneath

the great dark curtain it appeared there, on the horizon beyond the hills, like the germ of hope in a heart where all is colourless. Helen gazed at it with some intentness, and she had to brush her eyes when she turned away.

She had drawn up the blind in that window, and when she refaced the room it was with a sense of surprise at the degree of light displayed there. Extinguishing the lamp, the main objects in the chamber were still discernible in that early twilight, and Helen returned to her seat, placing herself so that her face was turned towards the dawn. Every movement had been noiseless; but fearful lest her mere spirit should have disturbed the sleeper, she looked closely at him.

To her horror she looked straight into his open eyes.

They were open undoubtedly, but although she gazed fixedly into their serene depths, and they apparently returned the gaze, there was no further sign of conscious recognition. Helen's heart was in her throat, and it was by superhuman effort that she controlled her actions; but she had resolved that the first movement was to come from him, and she kept her resolution. After perhaps a minute of this silent stare, Barnard's eyes were closed, and apparently he slept. Pressing her hand to her breast, Helen sank into the chair, and the next moment wept silently.

The light rapidly grew stronger and

Helen still sat in patient expectation. The grey had melted into a cloudless blue, except round the hazy horizon, and in the room it seemed the light of day. The birds were already active, but except for them there was no sound save the sleeper's breath. At length Helen's heart lept again, for on the wall of the chamber she saw a rosy patch betokening the first ray of the sun she had been expecting. She stood to look, and raised her hand to intercept the ray which was traversing the room. As she regarded the shadow of her fingers, a movement of the sleeper aroused her, and she instantly faced him. Whether he saw her or no, she hardly knew: but at the instant of her turning he called her name twice, hurriedly, and

in appeal. Without a moment's hesitation she folded him in her arms, and from the pressure of her breast he suddenly awoke.

'Oh, Helen, what a nightmare I have had!' he exclaimed, naturally, with a deep sigh.

But Helen could not find a word; only as she held him she saw that the full sun had burst into the room.

Beatrice awoke in fright, instantaneously conscious of some particular burden upon her mind. As soon as she was collected enough to recognize it, she prepared herself hurriedly for a visit to the sick-room, ready for any disaster that might confront her. She tapped in

nervous agitation at the door: so lightly that the two within, who were talking, did not hear it. She repeated the knock more loudly, and in Helen's accents was bidden to enter.

There lay Barnard,—looking deathly pale and ill it is true,—but smiling complacently, and betraying in his appearance the attentions which he had received at the hands of Helen. Beatrice could not disguise her amazement; but in smiling embarrassment she came forward in response to the summons she received. Helen's hand lay in that of her husband as she sat in the chair by the bed, but Barnard relinquished it to take that of his cousin.

'Yes, now I am in my right mind,' said

he, with a smile, from which, however, Helen found it necessary to avert her eyes. 'It seems like one long furious nightmare. A—ah!'

Then he closed his eyes, and lay back in effortless abandonment.

When in a few moments he re-opened them, it was with suddenness and a glance of anxiety; but seeing Helen sitting there in statuesque calm by the bedside, he softened his scrutiny and laid hold of her hand.

'Has Philip gone,—come back, I mean?' he asked, anxiously correcting himself. 'Oh, Helen, I want to be rid of that. We will go far away, and learn something of the meaning of life. You can teach me. I have felt different from

the first day I saw you. But how came I ill?'

He scrutinized her marble features, evidently in some kind of genuine uncertainty.

'How, Helen? Do you remember? I have had such dreams that I get puzzled. I can't distinguish them from the reality, and yet it is not possible that—no, no, that is impossible.'

'All the past has been dreams,' said Helen, calmly. 'Let us know nothing but the present and the future.'

He looked at her for some time in silence, as though arranging his mental forces, then he nodded.

'Yes, of course, that was it.' He drew Helen down towards his whisper. 'It

was the love that I doubted, Helen. That did all. I never believed in love for thirty years; then I discovered it; and then I thought it was a mad delusion again. And now,—well, well. I shall soon be all right again,' and he patted her hand playfully.

The doctor pronounced him vastly better that morning, and the hearts of the household were lifted.

Whatever had to be done, he required Helen to do it for him. It mattered not that she had sat long wakeful hours by his side, consumed by the most exacting of spiritual emotions: weariness could have no place in her. If Beatrice urged her secret solicitude, she was brushed silently aside.

Through the long summer afternoon did their contentment sustain them: all the rest of life was to be nothing to them but one protracted summer afternoon. Only of the future would they speak,—a glowing future in which all intellectual delights lay spread out for their exuberant sickles. Even Helen at moments gathered colour, and relaxed into a smile.

Upon the approach of evening, Barnard dozed, and as Helen thought, with a little irregularity of breathing, but she attached no consequence to the perception. The day to him must, of course, have been exceptionally tiring. Warned, too, of the measure of her own exhaustion she had decided to withdraw when the

last golden ray had left the cap of Black Law opposite.

Helen was by the window, gazing at the mellowing light, and contrasting her sunset meditations with those which had ushered in the dawn, when the doctor arrived. She gave her report in a whisper, and they approached the bed. The gentleman leaned down and placed his hand upon the patient's brow, then looked at Helen. Barnard's eyes opened, and he made a convulsive clutch at Helen. She gave him her hand, but his touch appalled her. Looking in horror at the doctor beside her, he shook his head.

'Delusion . . . delusion . . .' murmured Barnard, and spoke no more.

Before the golden cap was removed

from the brow of the Black Law he had breathed his last.

It was early the following morning that Mr. Philip Goldhawke arrived.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EBB.

In travelling to the Pines, in response to the telegram which had summoned him thither, Philip encountered Mr. Clement Secroft on the platform of Blankton Station. Recent circumstances had brought them before together, and the young Sybarite had entered to a certain extent into the sentimental distresses of the

lawyer. Clement displayed some nervous confusion at the meeting, which the other's subdued manner was not calculated instantly to remove.

'You are not going to the Pines?' asked Philip.

Secroft muttered an affirmative.

'Come with me, will you, for one moment?'

Goldhawke led the way to a waiting-room, and finding it empty, entered with Clement behind him.

'I think you had hardly better go just now. They are—in some trouble there.'

Secroft fixed his eyes in keen suspicion upon the face of his companion; so Philip felt in his pocket. Thence he produced

the telegram, and it was handed to Clement.

'What—has she murdered him?' stammered the latter, aghast at the disclosure.

'Hardly that. You didn't know he had been ill?'

Philip briefly recounted the circumstances for him, during the hearing of which the other paced to and fro over the carpet in a state of feverish agitation. At length he stopped, and held forth his hand to Goldhawke.

'Thank heaven, I met you. You won't mention the meeting?'

'Certainly not. Good-bye.'

From this interview Secroft went into the town, and passed without object from

street to street, gazing aimlessly into a shop-window here and another there, seeing nothing that he looked at, all objective vision dimmed by the consuming inferno which possessed his own brain.

Since he had fled from the hotel in London, he had passed his days mainly in excogitating futile, morbid projects which were to deliver his soul from its agonizing predicament; one tripping up another with suicidal impetuosity, and all hitherto leading but to frustrate zeal. The downfall of his own ideal was undoubtedly the centre of his woe. That that incarnation of the light could be at last so overwhelmingly established as nothing but a common cheat; a liar, a

swindler,—a what was she not?; this was the cut. It seemed to Secroft the very cataclysm of a world; the holocaust of an essential cosmos. It drove him to despair, and the very universe grew unsteady about him. For a day or two he tried to balance it, by inordinate application to professional labours; but, after the first unreasoning onslaught, his attention simply refused to be curbed, and he roamed again amidst the burning arid wastes of a neurotic imagination.

In this plight, he had at length formed some manner of resolve, but the issue of it had been merged in that encounter with Mr. Goldhawke. The lawyer had been bent upon a final interview with Helen, of that there was no doubt; but what

beyond,—probably it was indeterminate to the projector himself.

Even now the outlook was still more indeterminate. After an hour's aimless wandering about the town, he became in some measure aroused,—aroused at least to the ineffectual elements of his predicament at that moment. Then he turned back, and retraced his steps to the station. It was on the way that he was to receive yet another check, imparted by way of an instantaneous inspiration.

'He is dead,' thought he, as though then first aware of the fact which had been disclosed to him.

But the words rang and re-rang in his overstrained consciousness with more than their mere literal burden, and he eagerly

gathered the sound. It bore him company in the train.

Clement found himself able to pursue his legitimate calling with more than ordinary attention during the weeks that followed. He did not examine too critically the ethical aspects of the sustaining force, despite the well-known moral bias actuating his instincts; sufficient that it was there, and that it enabled him to sustain the practical calls upon him with quite exceptional efficiency. He had been successful in screening his recent experiences from the glare of popular comment; but his acquaintance now, nevertheless, took note of the improvement in his bearing.

Through all the succeeding development

of the Goldhawke problem, he maintained a strictly indifferent reticence. Nor was this only to the outside world. He persuaded himself that his mind was clear. 'He was dead,' the words frequently recurred to him. To do the man credit, it must be observed that his mere thousand pounds sat lightly on his soul. Of that, save as a shattered fragment of his celestial image, he did not think at all. But it seemed to him that even his more abstract emotion was at pause. He could not remember having had a more placid outlook on the world.

For about a month this went on; then he experienced another change. One hot sunny afternoon, as Secroft was lowering the blind of his office window to exclude

the scorching rays, a clerk knocked and entered his room.

'Miss Pildacre, sir, to see you,' was his blank announcement. Clement regarded him in silence for an instant, as though gathering a clue: then pronounced his acquiescence. In a moment the visitor entered.

It was a tall young lady, pale and beautiful, clad in tasteful sober garments of no pronounced distinction, who came in to him. As the lawyer took her hand, her complexion betrayed some little accession of colour, but she answered calmly his ready commonplace. She also took the chair which he brought forward for her.

'I am glad you have come,' he remark-

ed, as he sat down himself. 'I thought it possible.'

'I preferred it to writing; for, in repaying you this debt, I feel that a few additional words are due to you.'

Clement's brain was again in its turmoil. Shattered images and ideals rising ghost-like from their ashes.

'I shall be glad to hear them.'

Once temporize with his scruples, and he could not doubt of the issue; he temporized for all that. He sat back in his chair and trifled with a paper-knife upon which his eyes were fixed.

'That is what you were good enough to lend me.'

He took the paper she held out to him, and looked absently at it; then

more directly. It was a banker's draft.

'With interest,' he remarked, with uncertain utterance, the paper visibly trembling in his clutch.

'I believe it is correct,' said Helen, mistrusting his aspect.

With one supreme effort, Secroft rent off his bonds, and tore the paper up into a dozen fragments.

'Do you think I will accept money so obtained? Am I a knave as well as a fool?'

'I, at least, am hardly likely to consider you either.'

'You have considered me both. Every movement of your hand has shown it plainly. How else can I construe it?'

'Do not think I am come here to justify

myself. You must construe me as you will. The only word of explanation I have wished to give is with regard to yourself. Wilfully I have not lied to you. What I have said, I felt at the time to be true.'

'You would never marry, for instance?'

'So I felt when I told it you. Am I married?'

Her placid bearing astounded him, but served ultimately in some measure to quiet himself. The contrast was too obvious: the sense of his own humiliation too poignant.

'I hardly thought you would come here to indulge in quibbling.'

'Nor have I. For the present I am in no mood for quibbling,' said Helen, rising

from her chair. 'But I ought to have known that my errand would be useless.'

'No, no; you will not leave me like this. Could I think you a liar, Helen?'

'Unquestionably you have done so, and many things in addition,' she said, smiling supremely.

'Then I do so no longer,' he exclaimed, warmly. 'Say all that you came to say. You have suffered? You have seen——'

'Not in the way you suppose. We have no common ground for the estimate of a wounded conscience.'

'We have, Helen; believe me that we have. I am not the hide-bound puritan

that you suppose me. Has my behaviour suggested it?'

Helen shrank from his impulsive ardour.

'I had no thought of imputing it; but that does not bring our outlook the nearer.'

'Surely, it does.'

'Does not that belie you?' said she, rather theatrically, pointing to the fragments of the paper he had torn.

'Do you then defend the means by which that money was obtained?' he asked, more calmly.

'I neither condemn nor defend it. I do not weigh it.'

'Then you would enact again the——'

'Go on, I can bear it.'

'You wouldn't, Helen, you despise the remembrance,' he asserted. 'You cannot possibly convince me otherwise. I should only be a participator in your dishonour if I accepted that; nay, the promoter of it, the instigator. I would suffer pauperdom in preference. I have already quite enough to answer for, and I am willing to pay for it.'

'But I am not willing that you should pay for it,' said Helen, showing her first approach to fervour.

'That is now beyond you, Helen.'

Secroft was conscious of his increasing perturbation. All the old bonds were closing once more around him, if possible with accession of strength, and he did not

resist them. If the very world gave way, she could not be all that; nay, if she were——

'Then you spurn my wish? For the sake of a piece of trumpery convention, you will add to what you call my dishonour the crime of petty fraud?'

'To save you from it.'

'It is not so,' cried Helen. 'But I have done. I thought I might have left you otherwise.'

She passed on towards the door, but Secroft immediately intercepted her.

'Certainly, you do not leave me like this,' said he, the necessary action clearing his sight. 'Are you still insensible to human feeling?'

As he touched her, she faced him with

stern dignity, and he at once drew back.

'You have no right to address me like that. The mere fact of my being here ought to ensure me from it.'

'Forgive me, Helen: I had no right. If I could tear you from my heart; if weeks and months of maddening misinterpretation and frenzied doubt could have torn you from it, I should not have spoken so. I have tried to, but cannot. I must tell you that, say what you will. You need fear no insult.'

He drew back, turning and walking to the fireplace. But Helen did not go out.

'Do you think that I did it all to obtain that, or any, sum? Can you think that was my object?'

'No, I can't. I don't pretend to understand it.'

'Nor could I explain it to you. Let us leave it in the dark.'

'By all means, but the future?' asked he, turning abruptly round. 'Is that also to be left in the dark?'

'It must be. Who can say anything about it?'

'But you must have formed plans. You are now rich,' he said, glancing furtively at her, but instantly dropping his eyes.

'I am not.'

'You are not, Helen? Then what are you going to do?'

'That does not concern my visit here to-day. My father is able to support me,

so that no friend need be troubled on my account.'

'And am I one of such?'

'Could it be otherwise? I must now go.'

Secroft struggled with himself, fully aware of the indelicacy of reviving a positive suit at such time, but hopelessly undecided.

'But you don't say that our intercourse ends here?'

'Undoubtedly it does.'

'But as friends——'

'Is such friendship possible? . . . . Good-bye, Mr. Secroft.'

He took her hand silently, pressed it, and she had gone.

'Utterly frustrate!' he almost cried

aloud; then, snatching at his hat, he fled from the room.

Yes, she was there, scarce twenty paces down the street. She turned, displeased, as he appeared beside her.

'It is simply impossible, Helen,' he said, in an impetuous breath. 'You must tell me where you are going.'

She gave him an angry answer and walked forward. The stare of passengers was nothing to him: he simply went on beside her. Soon they reached a part alone.

'You will hardly persecute me further, Mr. Secroft,' said Helen, resuming her tone of proud composure.

'You know that I would die rather than persecute you for an instant. If you did

not know what actuates my conduct, do you think that I should pursue you?'

'Is the persecution the less for it?' She did not disguise the curling of her lip.

He looked at her and turned on his heel. Then Helen made her way to the station.

Some sort of determinate schooling Helen considered that she had had, and presumably she intended to apply it. It can hardly be supposed that there was anything final in this first apprenticeship to life, but that it was definite, so far as it went, her future action seemed to indicate. The purely theatrical had at least been

displaced, and a more or less serious acceptation of the universe adopted.

London, of course, was Helen's destination. Established there in a modest apartment, she habituated herself to the practical outlook of the world about her. From her father, now in a position of comparative affluence consequent upon his zealous assumption of technical labours, she temporarily accepted enough for the needs of bare subsistence; from her friend Beatrice she declined to accept. Under these conditions, Helen launched upon her new course. Definite intellectual effort formed one part of it; definite self-supporting labour another. The pursuit of the latter led her to a comprehensive survey of the working portion of her sex, and an

interesting investigation she made of it.

Helen was by no means a born philanthropist, despite a certain episode in her career which might have suggested the contrary. Her interest in the doings of her fellow-beings was mainly intellectual; to a certain extent indeed even yet dramatic. The progressive movement of woman as an order soon became more attractive to her than the mere anxieties and personal requirements of an individual. It is true that, within a month from her departure, the allowance from her father was regularly returned to him, arguing a practical attention to her own requirements in familiar details; but that was an insignificant idiosyncrasy of her own.

In this way some months passed. One

evening in the early days of October Helen returning, more than usually weary, from her labours of the day was fitting her latch-key in the door, when she was aware of a figure stepping up beside her from the pavement. Naturally she paid small heed, knowing that visitors were not in the habit of assailing herself. She was opening the door, when her name was distinctly pronounced by her side. She turned, and in the lamplight could distinguish the features of Mr. Clement Secroft. There was nothing sensational about the meeting. Both were composed, and a conventional greeting passed between them.

'May I speak to you?' he asked.

'Where?'

Helen had drawn her key from the door, and she turned from it, bidding him accompany her. They passed along the street and were soon in Euston Road. It was a cold, raw night, and the east wind came sweeping like a knife across their faces; but there were few passengers on the pavement, and Helen intimated that she was prepared to hear him.

'Are you fully contented with your life here?' asked Secroft, in an unexceptionally calm and matter-of-fact manner.

'It is a comprehensive question,' smiled Helen. 'Do you think many are?'

Clement's views of life were not particularly comprehensive, so that no doubt he misinterpreted her comment.

'I certainly do not suppose so, and for that very reason do I put the question to you in particular.'

'Lately I have looked more for interest than content. I have enough to eat, at any rate, and a roof to sleep under.'

'But you do not live a life under such terms; *you*, above all, cannot do so. A fulness of enterprise is, I know, essential to you. You cannot possibly have changed so radically.'

'Certainly I can picture a more ideal existence under imaginary circumstances,' said Helen, still sustaining the tone of purely speculative and disinterested discussion which she had adopted from the outset. 'But one has to recognize the necessity of voluntary sacrifice now-a-days.

One is hardly likely to miss learning that in this town, at any rate.'

'But you sacrifice needlessly. You stunt your own life out of a mistaken——'

'I am not at all aware of it,' interposed Helen, coldly, for Secroft was waxing unnecessarily warm.

'You must be—you must be. But I did not come here to be impertinent.'

Helen was conscious of an accession of tolerance for the man under these novel circumstances. Perhaps he interested her.

'What can make you so confident on the matter?' she asked, more genially.

'My previous knowledge of you. I do not believe in instantaneous conversions.'

'Oh, dear no, I am not converted by

any means. But I believe there is such a thing as personal development.'

'So do I, but I cannot think that yours has taken the direction you suggest. Is it not legitimate to make the most possible out of our individual existence?'

'Certainly.'

'And in the widest legitimate manner?'

Helen laughed an acquiescence.

'Then will you marry me, Helen, and come out with me to New Zealand? I sail this day week.'

'You think that would make the most possible for both of us?'

She did not laugh this time, however much she wished to.

'I should not make any such sweeping assertion,—at least, with regard to your-

self. But I think it highly probable that you would make very much more than under your present cramped system of life.'

'I am sorry to say that I cannot for the moment think so.'

'You consider mere marriage a disadvantage—a restraint?'

'I was not looking at it from that side. I was thinking of colonial life. I fear I have too much of the ancient civilization about me to settle there.'

'You, Helen?' exclaimed he, with unrestrained emphasis.

'Even I.'

'But modern life is much the same everywhere, except for the vast accession of freedom out there.'

Clement looked keenly at her as they passed under a lamp-light, and he saw her shake her head.

'Then you will not come, Helen?' he asked, with unusual composure and determination.

'Thank you, I cannot.'

'Then good-bye.'

He took her hand, pressed it there in the raw, night air, and they went in opposite directions,—he in the teeth of the black, east wind.

## CHAPTER XII.

'O TEMPORA! O MORES!'

'EXACTLY two years ago,' said Mr. Philip Goldhawke, as he and two other gentlemen were leisurely climbing the hill-side at the back of the Pines. 'It will always be very much of a problem to me.'

'All human conduct is a problem, my dear fellow,' replied Colonel Saltway, 'when you once abandon all conscious principle as a standard of life. We old-

fashioned people don't know where we have you.'

'But it seems to me, colonel, that Helen was by no means without conscious principle.'

'That only shows that you are not capable of understanding my remark, Charles: it in no way affects the remark itself.'

'Well, we generally understand principle to be sacrificed in the interests of self-seeking. I fail to see how Helen's enigmatical behaviour in the slightest degree promoted her own interests. I have thoroughly sifted the evidence, and I am convinced that she most resolutely declined any atom of profit out of the transaction.'

'That may or may not be true——'

'Nay, my dear uncle, I assure you it is literally true,' asserted Charles, more warmly. 'To some extent Goldhawke can confirm me here. She did not marry either for position in society or for lucre; for, the former they both gladly forswore before their marriage, and the latter she has very resolutely forsworn since. Excuse me, Philip . . . On her husband's death intestate, as you will know, by mere operation of law she became entitled to several thousands of pounds. Well, of this she positively refused to accept one penny. Yes, it is a fact. This man here, on appeal from her, proved equally obstinate, so there was a small fortune going a-begging,—until, at the joint persuasion

of several, our considerate friend Lady Ivelet consented to put us out of the difficulty.'

The colonel raised his eyebrows, and looked at Goldhawke enquiringly.

'This is certainly new, but it doesn't affect my position in the least,' he said. 'I did not for a moment suspect such a girl as Helen of mere vulgar aspirations. She is not the girl that gives her poor little mind to marrying well; I could never class her quite so low as that; but can't you see that she is just as unprincipled in her loftier way?'

'Mind, I don't want to reflect upon Lady Ivelet,' continued Charles. 'She got into an awkward position, and Helen, who got her into it partly, having the

opportunity of making some measure of pecuniary reparation, did the right thing in offering it. It has at least enabled one poor lady to carry her afflictions temporarily elsewhere with some dignity. Helen, in the meantime, has been earning her own livelihood in a type-writer's office. Apart from the very shocking tragedy involved, which we are agreed, I think, was very far from poor Helen's intentions, there is a kind of attractiveness about the circumstances . . .'

'Come, come, Charles,' interposed the colonel, with some gravity. 'You allow your merely chivalrous instincts to run away with your sober judgment. I don't accuse the girl of the whole enormity of her crime, not directly; but you are

lawyer enough to know that you are responsible for all the unforeseen results of an unlawful action. I can see the girl's predicament, I think, with tolerable clearness. It is one to which the vivid imaginations of the present sceptical time will be more and more exposed. Why, the imagination, sir, uncurbed by any sort of moral intuition, is the very devil,' concluded the colonel, with unwonted heat.

Mr. Saltway thought it best to acquiesce.

'You make the world nothing but an ephemeral spectacle,—a mere Punch and Judy show of a moment,' said the elder, with still more obvious ardour; 'and are surprised to find it such a sordid kennel, after all. Everything is modified by the

standard to which it is adjusted. Once the world played in the sight of God, and there was a kind of dignity even in the very pranks of the truant, for he at least knew that he was a truant. But now you are better accommodated, and having fixed yourselves and your day's doings as your supreme standard, what can you expect but ignominy and the most despicable confusion?'

'Of course, my dear uncle, from a lofty standpoint the whole exploit is detestable; but I only wanted to show that there was some little to be said in mitigation of judgment upon Helen.'

'It was unnecessary to me,' replied the other. 'I knew only too well that there was far too much to be said for her. If

she had been the vulgar adventuress, otherwise swindler, which some will adjudge her, there would have been nothing particularly moving about it, for such cattle will inherit their places to the end of time, as they have done since the beginning; but to me, Charles, it is positively tragic to contemplate such ruin of a fine nature as that young woman has displayed to us. She had enough intellect and good nature to endow half-a-dozen noble women withal, and that has all to be more than sacrificed because she has been born into a material, infidel time. It distresses me, and there's an end on't.'

'But is it not possible for her to be yet redeemed?' asked Philip.

The colonel shook his head impatiently.

'On what?' he asked. 'Type-writing blasphemous compositions, or fraudulent commercial correspondence? Do you think that an honest hand would submit to a type-writer? It is exactly because they experience a kind of bastard shame in writing out their enormities that these things have been introduced.'

'Probably,' said Philip, drily, respecting the colonel too much to bandy words with him. 'But I have news to-day that Helen has abandoned her engine of infamy, and is about to cross the seas.'

'Ha! Exactly!' snapped Colonel Saltway. 'And what next?'

Charles only looked up with an increased interest.

'She is married, and with her husband

is going to emigrate. He has come over for her.'

'What, the unfortunate Secroft?' asked Charles, and Philip nodded.

All digested the news in silence.

But when they came to the crags and had become seated, the colonel resumed his observations.

'Another confirmation of your plea of principle, Charles, isn't it?' he asked, drily. 'Do you mean to tell me that any woman with the slightest suspicion of a moral conscience would have proceeded to this issue?'

'The circumstances are peculiar,' urged Charles. 'It is quite possible that she has been positively pestered into doing this.'

'Tut—tut!' interposed the colonel.

'This man Secroft has been pursuing her for years,—indeed, I don't know why I need disguise the fact that it was he who provided her with funds in the first place for the prosecution of her novel design,—without any knowledge, of course, of her intention.'

'Then he has got his deserts,' said Colonel Saltway, 'and he will find they are about as much as he can manage. But it doesn't indemnify the woman, mind.'

'She may have given herself out of some idea of generosity,' suggested Philip, but seeing the colonel's features he wished he had left it to Charles.

'I say, Goldhawke,' remonstrated the latter.

'For value received,' observed the colonel, in his most bitter tone of sarcasm. 'It would be about worthy of the poor girl's morality. But,' he added, in a suddenly altered voice, 'it distresses me; let us change the subject.'

When they had returned home and the two younger gentlemen were together, they resumed the topic, so abruptly ended by the more scrupulous elder.

'I hear from my cousin that they sail in two days' time,' Philip said, in reply to his friend's curiosity; 'and she hints that it might be kind if I was there to see them

go. I don't quite see the concatenation, but if she thinks so, I shall go. I suppose you wouldn't care——'

'I should care immensely, but would it be quite the thing?'

'If it is kind in me, I don't see how it can be far otherwise in you. You had better come to support me, you know.'

'But doesn't it look like rather a vulgar flaunting of our——'

'You needn't fear that. Helen is not morbid. She takes a healthy view of life.'

'Then I shall go and bid her God-speed.'

The following day, accordingly, the two friends set off to town.

Beatrice had written her letter entirely upon her own responsibility, not having informed even her husband of the step she had taken. Nor had Philip sent her any answer, so that she was in doubt as to whether he would act upon her suggestion.

As they set forth on their journey to the Royal Albert Docks, both Mr. Pildacre and Beatrice displayed the considerable improvement which favourable circumstances had wrought upon their condition. The journalist (strictly journalist, however, no longer) could not quite repudiate his middle age; but in a highly respectable coat, 'chimney-pot,' and gloves accordant, and with his hair and beard scrupulously trimmed, there could seem nothing at all

ridiculous in his marital attitude to the young lady beside him. Beatrice had always looked older than she was, and her experiences had perhaps been enough to deliver her from the more orthodox *indicia* of bridehood. They had been but two months married, nevertheless, for it had taken considerable internal debate in Pildacre to reconcile his conscience to the alteration in the worldly prospects of Beatrice,—a debate which would have been probably protracted to this hour, had not Mr. Philip Goldhawke seen good to apply a facetious lever to a prospective arrangement in which for some reason he heartily concurred.

'I fear this is the best conclusion we

could look for, my dear,' said Nahum, reflectively. 'Of the vital nature of Mr. Secroft's attachment there can be no doubt.'

'No, not a bit. But about Helen?'

'She too may have——'

'No, no,' interposed Beatrice, hurriedly. 'I won't believe it. But it cannot be changed. They *may* be happy.'

'Really, my dear,' remarked her husband, in mild expostulation, 'this tendency to a despondent frame of mind . . .'

Meanwhile, standing alongside the stately hulk of a Peninsular and Oriental steamship, amongst the motley assembly which the departure of such a vessel can bring together, were two figures silent and apart. One, a tall well-looking lady

whose noticeable eyes travelled in critical regard over every detail of the spectacle around her, and whose comely features occasionally relaxed into an appreciative smile at anything she found peculiarly engaging: the other, a gentleman, young, and of good proportions, but of more sombre countenance than his attractive companion. His cheeks were spare and wanted colour, and his eye was more regardful of a visionary prospect than of the animating one immediately at hand. Occasionally he spoke, and then, in glancing at the face beside him, his eyes were alight. Every remark met with a ready and genial response from the lady, however slow she might be in originating conversation.

'Do you think they will come?' he asked once, in a tone which Helen seemed rightly to construe.

'You wish they wouldn't,' she replied, laughing. 'Yes, they are sure to come. Do you see that lady there with the dear little girl? I wonder how far she is going. Doesn't she look like an Italian? We call at Brindisi: she might be . . . That sail down the Mediterranean will pay for the whole of the voyage. We must not be ill *there*, at any rate, Clement.'

He smiled with absence of enthusiasm: but his eyes were alight when resting upon her features. After one such scrutiny, he glanced nervously about him.

'Are they—where?'

'No, no. It is Mr. Philip Goldhawke,' she said in a new tone; 'and—Mr. Saltway.'

The two gentlemen in question had been undoubtedly added to the assembly, and could be seen looking about them in obvious search. Helen advanced towards them, and the faces of both lightened. All greeted without restraint.

'This is really kind of you,' exclaimed Helen, in her most gracious manner.

'Really?' said Philip, glancing at her. 'I feared it might seem rather intrusive. Your father will . . .'

'I expect him every moment. But your presence will be an advantage. It will pass off the excessive introspection.

These partings are looked upon as an ordeal, and I shall be glad to counteract the mistake. I wonder you can resist booking instantly and going with us. Come down the Mediterranean at least. Mr. Saltway, won't you?'

Both gentlemen laughed and shook their heads.

'Engagements,' muttered Saltway.

'Mal de mer,' the other.

'I have purchased every specific known to the profession,' replied Helen to the latter, to whom she appeared particularly kind. 'Quite a case of bottles and boluses.'

'May they be effectual, with all my heart!' cried Goldhawke, jocularly.

'What—what's that?' exclaimed Mr. Pildacre from behind, coming upon a scene so wholly unexpected, and not having caught the object of the mirth. 'Ha, ha! Very good; really good.'

Philip and Saltway walked apart, displaying a praiseworthy curiosity in the nautical details around them.

'Poor Secroft seems in the dumps,' remarked Goldhawke. 'Not exactly the man for the Colonies, I should think.'

'He hasn't brightened up much there, certainly; but he will do,' was Saltway's comment.

It was Helen who had called them back after a brief conversation with Beatrice and her father, and with forces joined

the spirits of the party were strenuously sustained.

When the bell rang, and there were general signs of movement aboard, Helen embraced her father and Beatrice. She bade a hearty farewell to the other two gentlemen, whose kindness she really felt as a very pleasant experience, and turning last to Philip she said,

'You had better come with us.

"I seek a warmer sky,
And I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the South."'

Philip shook his head and laughed.

'This is quite warm enough, thank you.'

Secroft ushered his wife aboard, and

the others stayed until they steamed away.

As Philip waved his handkerchief in last adieu, even his eyes were not quite clear.

Pildacre and Beatrice wept outright,—the former finding with difficulty a final 'God bless you!'

It was in the November following that the important Aggthorpe Institute was opened by a member of the Royal house, amidst much glorification of the name of Goldhawke; and the descriptive article which the indefatigable secretary wrote for the leading county paper was pronounced a pretty piece of writing, whilst the journalist himself, after reading

it effectively to his admiring wife, confidently pronounced it the best product of his journalistic career. Needless to say that a copy found its way across the seas.

THE END.

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'"The Ides of March" is a capital book. The plot does not depend for its interest upon anything more fantastic than an old gentleman's belief that a family curse will take effect unless his son marries by a given date. The complications which arise from this son's being really in love with a girl whom he believes to have treated his friend, Captain Disney, very badly, and getting engaged to another girl, who transfers her affections to the same Captain Disney, are skilfully worked out, while the dialogue is, in parts, extremely bright, and the description of the ofunding of the Norchester branch of the Women's Sanitary League really funny.'—*Literary World.*

'It is entertaining throughout and really racy in parts. The plot is new, being built up on an old prophecy which the father of the hero, Major Westmorland, found, and upon which he developed a mania. It foretold vague misfortune which was to happen to their house when there should be an only son, who should have "ner wife ne childer" when the new moon appeared on the 1st of March. However, no harm is done; for, after some trouble, matters are cleared up, and all are made equally happy.'—*Manchester Examiner.*

'"The Ides of March," in spite of its classical name, is a story of the present time, and a very good one, full of lively conversation, which carries us merrily on, and not without a fund of deeper feeling and higher principle. We will not forestall the story, only saying that the surroundings of the hero, consisting of unconventional yet thoroughly nice people, are excellently drawn, and that the author knows when and how to give us a wholesome laugh.'—*Guardian.*

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# PART OF THE PROPERTY

## By BEATRICE WHITBY.

"The book is a thoroughly good one, its only noteworthy defect being a certain want of ease in some of the conversations which are a little too elaborate, too literary, and wanting in the light turns of true colloquy. The theme of the book is a fairly familiar one,—the rebellion of a spirited girl against a match which has been arranged for her without her knowledge or consent; her resentment at being treated, not as a woman with a heart and will, but as 'part of the property'; and her final discovery, which is led up to with real dramatic skill, that the thing against which her whole nature had risen in revolt has become the one desire of her heart. The mutual relations each to each of the impetuous Madge, her self-willed, stubborn grandfather, who has arranged the match, and her lover Jocelyn, with his loyal, devoted, sweetly-balanced nature, are portrayed with fine truth of insight; but perhaps the author's greatest triumph is the portrait of Mrs. Lindsay, who, with the knowledge of the terrible skeleton in the cupboard of her apparently happy home, wears so bravely the mask of light gaiety as to deceive everybody but the one man who knows her secret. Whatever exception may be taken to 'Part of the Property' on the grounds above indicated, it is refreshing to read a novel in which there is not a trace of slipshod work."—*Spectator.*

# CASPAR BROOKE'S DAUGHTER

## By ADELINE SERGEANT.

"'Caspar Brooke's Daughter' is as good as other stories from the same hand—perhaps better. Certain bits may strike a sceptic as far-fetched and improbable. 'What's the odds, however,' so long as the reader is amused—especially where fiction is concerned? And, on the whole, he is not badly amused, interested, or whatever the right term may be to express the influence on the mind of a book like 'Caspar Brooke's Daughter.' It is not of the sort that has much really marked originality or force of style, yet there is a good deal of clever treatment in it. It was quite on the cards that Caspar himself might prove a bore or a prig, or something else equally annoying. His daughter, too—the fair and innocent convent-bred girl—would in some hands have been really tedious. Both will pass, however, and more—though had there been another line about them we cannot say what our verdict would have been. As it is, the difficulties of the leading situation—a daughter obliged to pass from one parent to another on account of their 'incompatibility'—are cleverly conveyed. The wife's as well as the husband's part is treated with feeling and reticence—qualities which towards the end disappear to a certain extent. Other characteristics there are, intended mostly to be of the day and hour, whom one finds on further acquaintance a little superficial and not over-vital. Yet it is a story in some ways—not in all—above the average."—*Athenæum.*

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